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THE SOVIETS  
OF WORKERS'  
AND  
SOLDIERS'  
DEPUTIES  
ON THE EVE  
OF THE  
OCTOBER  
REVOLUTION

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## CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| FOREWORD . . . . .  | 5   |
| CHAPTER ONE   |     |
| THE FORMATION OF THE SOVIETS<br>OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES  |     |
| 1. The February Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution. The Emergence of the City and District Soviets in Petrograd . . . . .                            | 17  |
| 2. The Formation of the Soviets in Moscow . . . . .   | 31  |
| 3. The Formation of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies Throughout the Country . . . . .   | 37  |
| 4. The Social and Party Composition of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The Initial Stage in the Building of the Soviets . . . . . | 50  |
| CHAPTER TWO   |     |
| THE SOVIETS' ACTIVITIES IN THE ORGANISATION<br>OF THE INTERNAL LIFE OF THE COUNTRY<br>AFTER THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION                               |     |
| 1. The Agreement Between the Petrograd Soviet and the State Duma. The Formation of the Bourgeois Provisional Government . . . . .                 | 63  |
| 2. The Role of the Soviets in Forming Mass Workers' Organisations and in Improving the Material Conditions of Working People . . . . .            | 72  |
| 3. Directive No. 1 of the Petrograd Soviet. The Emergence of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Committees . . . . .                                      | 83  |
| 4. The Revolutionary Movement in the Countryside. The Emergence of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies . . . . .                                    | 92  |
| 5. The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Formation of Regional Associations of Soviets . . . . .           | 96  |
| CHAPTER THREE   |     |
| THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS'<br>DEPUTIES DURING THE PERIOD OF DUAL POWER   |     |
| 1. The Relations Between the Soviets and the Provisional Government and the Local Organs of Bourgeois Rule in the Country . . . . .               | 109 |
| 2. The Bolshevik Organisations and the Soviets in the First Months of the Revolution . . . . .  | 124 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 3. The Attitude of the Soviets to the War. The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies During the April Political Crisis . . . . .                     | 138 |
| 4. Re-elections to the Soviets in May-June 1917. Growth in the Number and Influence of the Bolshevik Factions . . . . .                                   | 154 |
| 5. The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The Formation of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets . . . . . | 169 |

#### CHAPTER FOUR

##### THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES FROM THE JULY CRISIS TO THE CRUSHING OF THE KORNILOV REVOLT

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1. The Central and Local Soviets During the July Political Crisis . . . . .  | 185 |
| 2. The Bolshevik Organisations and the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies After the End of the Period of Dual Power . . . . .                                    | 203 |
| 3. The Struggle Between the Political Parties in the Soviets in the Summer of 1917. The Further Bolshevizing of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . . | 211 |
| 4. The Soviets and the Moscow State Conference . . . . .   | 221 |
| 5. The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Counter-revolutionary Mutiny of General Kornilov . . . . .   | 233 |

#### CHAPTER FIVE

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS'<br>DEPUTIES DURING THE PERIOD OF THE GENERAL NATIONAL<br>CRISIS AND THE VICTORY OF THE OCTOBER ARMED UPRISING            |     |
| 1. The Winning of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in Petrograd, Moscow and Other Towns by the Bolsheviks . . . . .                              | 257 |
| 2. The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies at the Time of the Democratic Conference . . . . .   | 268 |
| 3. The Bolshevik Organisations and the Soviets on the Eve of the Socialist Revolution . . . . .  | 279 |
| 4. New Elections to the Executive Committees and Presidiums of Soviets. The Increasing Importance of the Soviets in the Political Life of the Nation . . . . . | 286 |
| 5. The Soviets During the "Second Kornilov Period" and the Preparations for the October Insurrection . . . . .   | 295 |
| 6. The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Proclamation of Soviet Power . . . . .                                 | 318 |
| SUMMING-UP . . . . .   | 337 |
| A BRIEF OUTLINE OF EXISTING HISTORICAL STUDIES OF THE SOVIETS OF 1917 AND A REVIEW OF AVAILABLE SOURCES . . .  | 340 |

## FOREWORD

The history of mankind has seen many social upheavals that have greatly changed the destinies of the peoples both of individual nations and of entire continents. Among these were the English and French Revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries, the Civil War in America, the 1848 Revolutions in France and Germany, the 1871 Paris Commune, and latterly the struggles of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America for their freedom and independence.

The first quarter of the 20th century was marked by an event of a special order—the socialist revolution, the first in history, that took place in Russia. It produced a radical change in the life of the peoples of Russia and had, and still has, a powerful effect on the advance of the liberation movement the world over.

More than half a century has passed since the heroic days of October 1917, but progressive humanity continues to take a keen interest in the history of the Russian Revolution. The prophecy which John Reed, the famous American journalist, made in 1919, has come true:

"Just as historians search the records for the minutest details of the story of the Paris Commune, so they will want to know what happened in Petrograd in November 1917, the spirit which animated the people, and how the leaders looked, talked and acted."<sup>1</sup>

The October Socialist Revolution was a product of the law-governed progressive development of human society, prepared for by the whole course of Russian and world history, by the long process of the maturing of the material and subjective conditions that were necessary for this tremendous eruption.

In the last 30 years of the 19th century capitalism moved into its last and highest stage of development—imperialism. This was con-

<sup>1</sup> John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, N. Y., 1935, p. XII.

nected with the further sharpening of all the contradictions of the capitalist social system, especially its main contradiction, that between labour and capital. The imperialist race for markets and raw materials also sharpened to the limit the contradictions between the capitalist powers themselves and between the metropolitan countries and their colonies.

World War I represented the peak of the struggle for the redivision of the world into colonies and spheres of influence among the imperialists. The war brought with it hunger, disease and unprecedented economic devastation. It took a toll of 10 million human lives, with another 20 million wounded. It aggravated still more all the contradictions of imperialism and precipitated the general crisis of capitalism.

The revolution began to ripen in Russia in the early years of the 20th century. Here, the contradictions of imperialism were even more intense than elsewhere. The economy was controlled by the biggest monopolies, home and foreign. The workers and peasants were ruthlessly exploited by the factory owners, landowners and merchants, and by the representatives of foreign capital. The tsarist government condemned the country to the miserable existence of a semi-colony of the developed countries of Europe and the U.S.A. And the peoples living in the outlying areas of the Russian Empire were subjected to the most cruel national oppression.

The predatory policies of imperialism, aggravated by the survivals of serfdom, poverty and lack of civil rights, made the life of the 160 million people of Russia intolerable. There was only one way out for them—the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy and then of the bourgeois-landlord system, and the establishment of workers' and peasants' rule.

The working class was the main driving force and the leader of the socialist revolution in Russia and the poorest peasants were its closest allies. There were about three and a half million veteran proletarians in factories and mines, making up the core of the working class in pre-revolutionary Russia, while workers of all categories numbered about 15 million.

The numerical strength of the working class is certainly an important factor, though not the only factor determining its role in the public life of a country. Lenin pointed out that the power of the proletariat is much greater proportionately than its share of a country's population because of its leading position in social production, its strong connections with other working people, its revolutionary characters and traditions, and its capacity for self-organisation and discipline.

It is necessary to mention the important objective circumstances which promoted the organisation and political education of Russian workers before the revolution.

The degree of concentration of workers in big and very big factories early in the 20th century exceeded that of the most advanced imperialist powers. The geographical location of the industrial proletariat was also favourable—more than half of the working class was concentrated in the Petrograd and Central Regions of Russia. Moreover, the Russian proletariat had amassed an enormous amount of experience over a number of decades of economic and political struggle. Led by the Party of Bolsheviks,<sup>1</sup> the working class had carried through two bourgeois-democratic revolutions, and this later enabled it to do away with capitalism altogether in the socialist revolution.

Pre-revolutionary Russia was largely a country of small peasants. But there were very many handcraftsmen, artisans and domestic servants in gubernia and uyezd centres and bigger country towns who were close to the working class and were a potential reserve of the revolution.

The revolutionary movement of the Russian proletariat for socialism was combined with the broad democratic movement of all the country's oppressed for withdrawal from the imperialist war, and with the peasants' struggle for land and the national liberation movement of the peoples living in the outlying areas of the Russian Empire.

Large military garrisons were stationed in Petrograd, Moscow, gubernia and many uyezd centres. Peasants constituted the bulk of the soldiers but during World War I many city workers were also called up.

The Party of Bolsheviks led by Lenin was the guiding force of the revolutionary-democratic and communist movement in Russia. Lenin enriched the Marxist theory of revolution in the new conditions by developing an integrated and consistent theory of the motive forces of the bourgeois-democratic and socialist revolutions, and by deter-

<sup>1</sup> The Bolsheviks—the revolutionary Marxists who united around Lenin at the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (R.S.D.L.P.) in 1903, and who received the majority of the votes in the elections to the central organs of the Party (which is why they were called Bolsheviks, which means in Russian "Those in the majority"). The opportunists among the delegates remained in the minority (and were thus named Mensheviks, which means "those in the minority"). The opportunists were expelled from the Party at the 6th (Prague) Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. (1912). The 7th Party Congress (March, 1918) changed the name of the Party to the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

mining the strategy and tactics of the Communist Party that were to lead to the conquest of state power by the proletariat. In the pre-October period the Bolsheviks worked in the mass organisations such as the trade unions, the various committees, and co-operative insurance societies, etc., to further the political education and organisation of the workers and of the soldiers and peasants. Of special importance were the Soviets (councils) of workers', soldiers', sailors', peasants' and other deputies representing the working people.

The Soviets first appeared in 1905. They were formed in a revolutionary manner on the initiative of vanguard workers in revolt against the tsarist autocracy. Lenin immediately recognised the Soviets as unprecedented self-governing organisations of working people destined to embody the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants and to form the provisional revolutionary government.<sup>1</sup>

As the first bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1905-07 gathered momentum, it involved new sections of the population and the mass political form of organisation of the city workers (the Soviets of Workers' Deputies) spread to the countryside and to the Army. There then emerged Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, and Soviets of Soldiers', Sailors', Cossacks' and other deputies. In some cities (Krasnoyarsk, Sevastopol and others) there arose united Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and these comprised the embryo of the alliance of the working class and the peasantry that was the decisive social force in the overthrow of tsarism and, later, of the bourgeois-landlord system. Among the organisers and leaders of the first Soviets of Workers' Deputies were well-known Bolsheviks—M. V. Frunze, P. P. Postyshev, F. N. Samoilov and many others.

Analysing the situation in which the first Soviets appeared, and their aims and tasks, Lenin drew attention to the fact that in the first bourgeois-democratic revolution Soviets of Deputies defended the interests not only of the working class and the poorest peasants, but also those of all the democratic sections of the population and those of the different nationalities living in Russia. In spite of the efforts of the petty-bourgeois Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary parties to prevent the Soviets of Workers' Deputies from reaching out to the peasants and soldiers and other non-proletarian sections of the people, the Bolsheviks strove to unite all the potential forces of the revolution in the Soviets.

The 1905-07 Revolution culminated in workers' armed uprisings in Moscow, Kiev, Rostov-on-Don, Novorossiisk, Krasnoyarsk, Chita,

Irkutsk and other cities. In all these places the Soviets acted with great energy: they formed detachments of workers' militia, armed the workers, gave them training in the use of arms, and so on.

The first Soviets did not last long, but they lasted long enough for many hundreds of thousands of working people to experience and to become persuaded of the truly democratic character of the new embryonic organs of revolutionary power, which represented, as Lenin put it, "an authority open to all", which "carried out all its functions before the eyes of the masses... and was a direct and immediate instrument of the popular masses, of their will".<sup>1</sup>

The revolutionary classes of Russia were opposed by the bourgeoisie and the landowners with their various political parties and "public" organisations.

The chief parties of the capitalists and landowners were formed during the first bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1905-07. The big bourgeoisie and the owners of large capitalist estates were united in the Union of October the Seventeenth (Oct. 17th 1905 was the date on which Nicholas II issued his Manifesto falsely promising the granting of constitutional rights.—A. A.). The leaders of the Octobrists, as they were called, were A. I. Guchkov, a factory owner, and M. V. Rodzyanko, a landowner. In 1912 a liberal-monarchist grouping came into existence closely linked to the industrial bourgeoisie of the Central Industrial Area. It founded the Progressist Party. The factory owners P. P. Ryabushinsky and A. I. Konovalov played a prominent part in this party.

But the largest and most influential bourgeois-landowners' party in Russia was the Constitutional-Democratic Party (the Cadets). This party called itself the party of "people's freedom". It was formed by uniting wide sections of the city bourgeoisie, landowners who had become bourgeois, and kulaks. The Cadets also included a large number of bourgeois intellectuals.

Among the leaders of the Cadets were the bourgeois historian P. N. Milyukov, the former "legal Marxist" P. B. Struve, the bourgeois Zemstvo<sup>2</sup> official A. I. Shingaryev, the landowner F. I. Rodichev, and the engineer N. V. Nekrasov. The main demand of the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> Zemstvo—the name given to the local self-government bodies formed in the central gubernias of tsarist Russia in 1864. The landowners dominated the Zemstvos, but the representatives of the bourgeoisie also gradually acquired influence in them. The powers of the Zemstvos were limited to purely local economic problems (hospitals and road building, statistics, insurance, etc.). Their activities were controlled by the local governors and by the Minister of the Interior, who could rescind any decisions of which the government disapproved.

Cadets (before February 1917) was for the establishment of a constitutional and parliamentary monarchy in Russia. The central organ of the Cadets was the newspaper *Rech* (Speech).

Up to the time of the February Revolution the bourgeois and landowners' parties acquired considerable power because of the sharp deterioration in the position of tsarism. But their opposition to the tsarist autocracy was limited to a very timid criticism. Indeed, the Cadets and the Octobrists were quite ready to strike a bargain with tsarism at the expense of the revolutionary classes. That is why none of the bourgeois and landowners' parties had any wide social basis of support in the country.

The most well-known petty-bourgeois parties in Russia were the Menshevik and the Socialist-Revolutionary (S.R.) parties. They functioned illegally or semi-legally and regarded themselves as the parties of the masses. The programmes of these parties of petty-bourgeois socialism included demands for certain revolutionary-democratic changes, above all the overthrow of the tsar. This insured them the support of large sections of the people, mostly peasants, and also some workers and the city petty-bourgeoisie.

In 1906 there appeared a legal Popular Socialist Party. In defining the class basis of this party Lenin said that its members "are trying to adapt themselves to the interest of the thrifty muzhik, are adulterating socialism to suit his interests".<sup>1</sup> Prominent members were A. V. Peshekhonov, N. F. Annensky and others.

Another petty-bourgeois group was the Trudoviks. This included peasants' deputies to the State Duma<sup>2</sup> and a number of intellectuals. They reflected the interests of certain bourgeois and petty-bourgeois elements in the countryside. The Trudoviks were led by A. F. Kerensky<sup>3</sup> in the 4th State Duma.

The most numerous party of petty-bourgeois socialism was the S.R. Party. It was formed late in 1901 during the rise of the peasant movement and considered itself the party of the "labouring people". The S.R. Party Programme seemed radical enough on the surface. It demanded a democratic republic, universal suffrage, the 8-hour working day, free education, workers' social insurance to be paid

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> The State Duma was a representative body with restricted rights formed by the autocracy under the pressure of the 1905-07 Revolution. It was designed to suppress the Revolution and build an alliance between the autocracy and the bourgeoisie, though with the autocracy retaining full political power. The State Duma lasted from 1906 to 1917 (there were the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th State Dumas—the 4th lasting from 1912 to 1917).

<sup>3</sup> A. F. Kerensky joined the Socialist-Revolutionaries in March 1917.

for by the employers, and so on. But the central plank of the S.R. platform was the "socialisation" of the land, and its transfer to "democratically organised communities", with egalitarian land-usage, which the S.R.s mistakenly imagined would constitute a socialist measure. At the same time the S.R.s rejected the idea of working-class hegemony in the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat. They ignored the existence of survivals of feudal bondage in the countryside and also the stratification of the peasantry. V. M. Chernov was generally recognised as the theoretician of the S.R. Party, and its other leaders were N. D. Avksentyev, A. R. Gots, V. M. Zenzinov, and B. V. Savinkov.

Expressing the interests of the petty bourgeoisie, the S.R.s stood mid-way between the proletariat and the big bourgeoisie and constantly wavered from one side to the other. The subjective idealist world outlook of the S.R. Party and the contradiction between its programme and its political line eventually resulted in its losing influence among the working people.

The Central Committee of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and its Right-wing leaders adopted extremely chauvinistic positions hostile to the proletariat and its Marxist-Leninist Party. The central organ of the S.R.s was the newspaper *Dyelo Naroda* (People's Cause).

In the summer of 1917 a Left wing began to form in the S.R. Party (M. A. Spiridonova, B. D. Kamkov, A. L. Kolegayev, P. P. Proshyan, I. Z. Steinberg). The Petrograd Committee of the Party was in the hands of left S.R.s, and they had their own paper, *Znamya Truda* (Banner of Labour).

The second biggest petty-bourgeois party was the social-democratic party of the Mensheviks. By its class nature, political programme and tactics it comprised the most opportunistic wing of petty-bourgeois democracy. "The Mensheviks are the worst enemies of socialism," Lenin said, "because they clothe themselves in a proletarian disguise; but the Mensheviks are a non-proletarian group. In this group there is only an insignificant proletarian upper layer, while the group itself consists of petty intellectuals."<sup>1</sup>

During the First World War very many Mensheviks actively supported the slogan of the bourgeoisie calling for "the defence of the Motherland", i.e., they moved over to the position of social-chauvinism. Plekhanov was then on the extreme right of this trend. While the Menshevik faction in the 4th State Duma (led by N. S. Chkheidze) did not, at the beginning of the war, vote for the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 181.

imperialist war credits, neither did it protest against the social-chauvinism of the bourgeoisie. And later on prominent representatives of Menshevism headed so-called workers' groups attached to war industries committees, so that they were, together with the S.R.s, the chief carriers of the slogan of "the defence of the Motherland" in the Army and among a considerable part of the working class.

The dominant trend in Menshevism was the Centrist one. Its leaders were F. I. Dan, I. G. Tsereteli and N. S. Chkheidze. This Centrist trend was itself subdivided into "Left" and "Right" groupings. The members of the Organising Committee (O.C.) of the Mensheviks Abroad were regarded as the "Lefts": Y. O. Martov, A. S. Martynov, P. B. Axelrod and others.

Besides the chief trends of petty-bourgeois socialism there were a few other groups and political parties of anarchists, maximalists, and non-factional and national (Ukrainian, Lithuanian, etc.) social-democrats.

\* \* \*

The experience that had been acquired by Russian workers in 1905 was given theoretical expression by the Bolsheviks and their leader Lenin. In particular, during World War I, the Bolsheviks repeatedly discussed the question of the Soviets. A circular of the executive commission of the Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) read:

"The workers' efforts to organise are so great that the C.C. has resolved to agitate for the convocation of a Workers' Parliament in opposition to the various bourgeois organisations. Deputies from factories and plants elected on the basis of proportional representation in all cities should make up an all-Russia Soviet (Council) of Workers' Deputies on which our people will strive to obtain a majority."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin highly valued the work of the Petersburg Committee of the Bolshevik Party in organising, uniting and politically educating the working class during the First World War. In October 1915 he wrote an article called "Several Theses" which contained recommendations on the principal issues before the revolutionary movement. Lenin then drew attention to the fact that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, and the revolutionary soldiers' and peasants' committees,

<sup>1</sup> *The Petrograd Proletariat and the Bolshevik Organisation in the Years of the 1914-18 Imperialist War*, Collection of Materials and Documents, Leningrad, 1939, p. 62 (Russ. ed.).

should be regarded as the organs of the future insurrection, as organs of revolutionary power.

"It is only in connection with the development of a mass political strike and with an insurrection, and in the measure of the latter's preparedness, development and success that such institutions can be of lasting value."<sup>1</sup>

At the end of 1916 and in the early part of 1917 a revolutionary situation began to build up. Lenin was concerned at the time with the practical problem of how to unite the various regions and districts of the country once the revolution had wiped out the existing bourgeois state. Drawing on his research into the question of the state and revolution, Lenin wrote: "The whole thing could, I would say, be briefly and strongly expressed as follows: *replacement* of the old ('ready-made') state machine and *parliaments* with *Soviets of Workers' Deputies* or their authorised representatives. Therein lies the essence!"<sup>2</sup> Thus Lenin expressed the idea that the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants' and other Deputies were the most likely and desirable form of political organisation for the working people in Russia. The idea of a Republic of Soviets was further developed by Lenin after the February Revolution in his famous "April Theses".<sup>3</sup>

We shall now relate the story of the organisation and work of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on the eve of the October Socialist Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 402.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. 33, p. 231, 5th Russ. ed.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. 24, p. 23.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FORMATION  
OF THE SOVIETS  
OF WORKERS'  
AND SOLDIERS'  
DEPUTIES



## 1. THE FEBRUARY BOURGEOIS-DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION. THE EMERGENCE OF THE CITY AND DISTRICT SOVIETS IN PETROGRAD

The New Year of 1917 saw in the third winter of the war. World War I had brought immense suffering to the people of Russia. 15 million men had been called up over a period of two and a half years to join the Russian Army. These included 13 million peasants and about 2 million workers.<sup>1</sup>

The economy was devastated. In the war-time atmosphere the exploitation of workers by factory owners became more severe. The cheap labour of women and children was made use of on a wide scale and the real value of wages was continuously falling. According to the data of the Moscow labour exchange the average wages of workers rose by the five times over 3 years (July 1914-August 1917) while the prices of food (bread, milk, meat) went up by 6.6 times, and the prices of some staple articles of consumption such as footwear, soap and kerosene by 12 times.<sup>2</sup>

Agriculture suffered tremendously from the war. After repeated drafts, the countryside was left almost without male hands. This and the continuous requisitioning of cattle and horses undermined and finally ruined most farmsteads. The total harvest of grain, feed crops and potatoes had dropped to 5,000 million poods<sup>3</sup> by 1917, a decrease of one third since 1914.<sup>4</sup>

The country was on the verge of a food crisis. Strict rationing was introduced in Petrograd, Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kharkov and other big cities, but this did not help matters a great deal. A

<sup>1</sup> *Russia in the 1914-1918 War*, Statistical Information, Moscow, 1924, pp. 18, 49 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Rabochy Put* (Workers' Path), October 14, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> A *pood* was an old Russian unit of weight equal to 16.38 kilograms, or about 1/3 cwt.

<sup>4</sup> P. I. Lyashchenko, *The History of the People's Economy of the U.S.S.R.*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1956, p. 637 (Russ. ed.).

disorganised railway system and the much depleted naval and river fleets nearly deprived the industrial centres of all possibility of getting food from the Kuban, Siberia and other agricultural areas. In late January 1917 there was only a 10-day stock of flour left in Petrograd. More and more often notices went up on shop doors saying: "No bread today."

War expenditures were high. Russia's state debt increased from 8,800 million rubles in 1914 to 60,000 million in 1917. And as her dependence on foreign imperialism increased, Russia's foreign debt rose to 18,500 million rubles.

The extremely hard working conditions and semi-starvation of the workers and the defeats of the tsar's armies at the front lines, together with the ruination of the countryside, speeded up the development of a revolutionary situation. Above all, the strike movement gained in strength. Whereas there had been 153 strikes involving 93,000 workers during the first eight months of the war (August 1914-March 1915), the following six months (April-September 1915) saw 792 strikes with 778,000 workers participating in them. And in January and February 1917 alone 676,000 workers went on strike in factories under government supervision. In January, 66% of these participated in political strikes, the figure rising to 95% in February.

The Russian peasants and the nationalities inhabiting the outlying regions also rose up in struggle against the tsarist autocracy. There was an almost incessant stream of news from various provinces about peasant risings against landowners and the seizure of grain, cattle and implements. The unrest spread to the Army and Navy. There were more and more cases of soldiers and sailors disobeying officers' orders, and soldiers began to fraternise with the enemy at the front. All this indicated that the country was on the brink of a second people's revolution to get rid of the contradictions in the social and state system of Russia that had remained unresolved since 1905, and which had been aggravated by the imperialist war.

The rapid growth of the revolutionary and democratic movement alarmed the tsar and the bourgeoisie. But they hoped to control it on the basis of the experience they had gained in the 1905-07 Revolution. Early in 1917 the tsar's government decided to dissolve the 4th State Duma and to sign a separate peace with Germany in order to have a free hand to crush the rising revolutionary movement. However, this programme, especially the prospect of Russia's withdrawal from the war, did not suit the plans of the predatory Russian bourgeoisie and its allies, the imperialists of the Entente. The leaders of the largest bourgeois parties of Russia (the Cadets and the Octobrists) instead worked out a special scheme to "transform the state

system". This consisted in forcing the abdication of Nicholas II in favour of his small son Alexis and in appointing the tsar's brother Michail as regent, Michail being closely connected with the bourgeoisie. Both of these conspiracies against the revolution (the tsar's and the bourgeoisie's) were prepared in deep secret, but neither of them was destined to be realised.

On the twelfth anniversary of Bloody Sunday (the shooting down of a workers' demonstration by tsarist troops in Petersburg in January 1905) a powerful wave of strikes rolled over the country. There were strikes and workers' demonstrations in Petrograd, Moscow, Tula, Nizhni-Novgorod, Baku, Kharkov and other cities.

The liberal bourgeoisie tried to use the revolutionary situation to promote its own selfish aims. The 4th State Duma was to resume its activities on February 14.<sup>1</sup> The leaders of the bourgeois parties, supported by the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, tried to persuade the workers to go to Tavrichesky Palace to express their confidence in the Duma. But the character of this manoeuvre of the enemies of the revolution was recognised by the Bolsheviks in good time. The Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) appealed to the workers to come out with their class demands. The workers responded to this call of the Bolsheviks and about 60 Petrograd factories were out on strike on February 14.

The workers of the Putilov Works were also in the front ranks of the fighters against tsarism, for democracy and peace. They struck on February 18 and sent delegates to other factories, calling on their workers to join the strike. Factories and works in the Vyborg, Narva and other districts of Petrograd followed suit. According to police records, which are far from complete, there were 173 places of work and 200,000 men out on strike on February 24. The Petersburg Bolshevik Committee called on the workers to unite and to fight openly against tsarism.

The proletariat could expect to achieve success in an uprising only if it had the active support of the Army. The Bolsheviks realised this and did a great amount of work to attract the Petrograd garrison to the workers' side. Bolsheviks penetrated their barracks to explain to the soldiers what was happening and what it meant. The Petersburg Bolshevik Committee and the district Party committees began to receive information of soldiers refusing to disperse demonstrations.

<sup>1</sup> Both here and throughout the book dates are given according to the old calendar. The new one (the Gregorian) was introduced in Russia only after the October Revolution, on January 31, 1918 (Old Style)—the next day becoming February 14 (New Style).

Unable to trust the capital's garrison, the tsar's government tried to draw in the Petrograd cavalry reserves and Cossacks from Tsarskoye Selo and Pavlovsk (suburbs of Petrograd) and also requested reinforcements from the Northern and Western fronts. The police set up machine guns in the attics of houses and on the tops of fire towers and church belfries. Much was expected of agents, provocateurs and the security forces. On the night of February 25-26 the police raided the city. Members of the Petersburg Bolshevik Committee found themselves among those arrested. The arrest of the Petersburg Committee was a heavy blow, but it caused no disorganisation in the movement. As was suggested by the Bureau of the Bolshevik Central Committee,<sup>1</sup> the duties of the city Party centre were assumed by the Vyborg district committee.

On the morning of February 27 the Royal Guards of the Volynsky Regiment—and, later, of the Moscow, Preobrazhensky and Litovsky regiments—rose in arms. Revolutionary workers and soldiers seized the Arsenal, the building of the Main Artillery Department, the railway stations, the post office, the telegraph office, and the prisons, setting free political prisoners.

The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies emerged in the course of this armed battle against tsarism. Surviving documents and the reminiscences of those who took part in the February Revolution show that the election of deputies to the Petrograd City and District Soviets took place at some factories even before the final victory over tsarism. One member of the underground Vyborg District Bolshevik Committee, N. F. Sveshnikov, recalls that at the district committee meeting which was held on the evening of February 25 it was noted that many factories had already started to elect representatives to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

Workers at the Franco-Russian and Promet plants elected their representatives to the Soviet on February 24. Elections to the Workers' Soviet of the Vyborg District were held at the Parviainen Factory on February 26. Another comrade, F. Z. Yevseyev, remembers that in the tool-shop of the munitions factory workers had been preparing for the formation of a Soviet of Deputies before February 27. Veterans of the Revolution, Bolsheviks F. A. Lemeshev, I. G. Gavrilov and V. Y. Kayurov, also say that at certain factories workers elected their deputies to the Petrograd Soviet on February 26 and 27. All this indicates that the 1905 traditions were alive among the revolutionary workers of Petrograd. From the first days of the

<sup>1</sup> The Bureau of the Central Committee of Bolsheviks was the leading organ of the Bolshevik Party in Russia from 1912 to 1917.

February Revolution they started organising Soviets as militant centres of the struggle to overthrow tsarism.

Back in 1915, when the first signs of the revolutionary situation were appearing in Russia, Lenin wrote that the Soviets should be formed "only in connection with the development of a mass political strike and with an insurrection, and in the measure of the latter's preparedness, development and success".<sup>1</sup> This was just the situation at the end of February 1917. Following the instructions of their leader, the Bolsheviks successfully united the working class around themselves.

Not long before the arrest of its members, the Petersburg Bolshevik Committee discussed in detail the revolutionary events that were taking place in the capital. District committees and Party bodies at factories and plants were recommended to support the workers' initiative in setting up strike committees. These committees were to appoint representatives to the Information Bureau that was to be organised by the Petersburg Committee so that they could keep in touch with all factories and carry out Party directives. It was intended that as the strike grew this Information Bureau should become the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, following the 1905 model.<sup>2</sup> But subsequent events unfolded so fast that no intermediate organisations were needed. On the workers' direct initiative elections to the Petrograd City and District Soviets were held at factories.

The documents of the enemy's camp also testify to the energetic activities of the Bolsheviks in organising Soviets during the February Revolution. The agent provocateur Shurkanov reported to his chief on February 26 that the Bolsheviks had raised the question of forming a Soviet of Workers' Deputies in the near future.... The election to the Soviet would, he said, probably take place on the next morning at the factories and workshops and by the evening the Soviet of Workers' Deputies would be ready to start functioning. Another police agent reported that the Bureau of the Bolshevik Central Committee had decided to send its representatives to Moscow and Nizhni-Novgorod with Party assignments in order to help in forming mass organisations of working people. It is worth noticing that police reports never mentioned the S.R.s or the Mensheviks, who later presented themselves as the organisers and creators of the Petrograd Soviet.

On the day of the victory of the Revolution, February 27, the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks issued a Manifesto "To All the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, p. 402.

<sup>2</sup> Central State Archives of the October Revolution, File 1021.

Citizens of Russia". This Manifesto contained the chief measures to be taken by the future Revolutionary Government in the interests of the working people. Lenin was very enthusiastic about this document.<sup>1</sup> The Bureau of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and local Party organisations took steps to acquaint the working people more fully with the Manifesto. According to available information it was printed as a separate leaflet on February 27 in 120,000 copies, then in a Supplement to the first issue of *Izvestia*, the organ of the Petrograd Soviet, and in *Pravda* and other Bolshevik newspapers.

The Manifesto "To All the Citizens of Russia" was discussed at numerous gatherings and meetings of Petrograd workers and soldiers. A. S. Gundorov, a worker of the Obukhov Works and a Party member since 1915, writes in his memoirs that workers in the Neva District knew of the Manifesto on February 28 when they began to elect deputies to the Petrograd Soviet.

The appeals and leaflets issued by the Bolsheviks in the first days of the February Revolution explained the political form of the government that was to replace the tsarist autocracy. A leaflet printed by the Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) on February 27, spoke of organising strike committees at factories whose representatives would comprise the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, the latter to form the Provisional Revolutionary Government.<sup>2</sup> A resolution of the general meeting of the Vyborg District Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) on March 1st, 1917, contained, among other things, the demand for the Soviet of Workers' Deputies to proclaim itself the Provisional Revolutionary Government at once.

The leading Party bodies of the Bolsheviks therefore concluded that the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies should become the political form of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasants.

But the organisational and political work of electing deputies to the Petrograd Soviet involved great difficulties. The Bolshevik organisation in the capital had been considerably weakened by the incessant repressions of the tsarist authorities. In early March 1917, when the Petrograd branch of the Party emerged from underground, it numbered only about 2,000 Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, in the decisive moments of the battle against tsarism the Bolsheviks were at the very front lines, i.e., participating in armed uprising. Members of the

underground Petersburg Committee N. I. Podvoisky, N. G. Tolmachev, P. I. Koryakov, I. D. Chursin and N. F. Yagodzhanov (those who escaped arrest on the night of February 25-26) fought together with vanguard workers' detachments in the streets of Petrograd.

The petty-bourgeois parties were in a better position at the time of the February Revolution. From the beginning of the imperialist war the Mensheviks and the S.R.s had favoured the slogan calling for the "defence of the Motherland", and their organisations were not therefore as ruthlessly suppressed as the Bolshevik ones. Now, adjusting themselves to the situation, the petty-bourgeois socialists retained their factions in the 4th State Duma, formed a "Workers' Group" in the Central War Industries Committee, and secured their positions in co-operative, insurance and other organisations. Relying on their legal centres and possessing considerable financial means and a staff of journalists and agitators, the Mensheviks and the S.R.s achieved a large growth of their organisations in the first weeks of the Revolution. The Bolsheviks comprised only some 15 people in the Neva Shipyards in March 1917, while the S.R. organisation had 500 members on its lists. The Izhora Works had only 27 Bolsheviks but about 800 S.R.s, the factory producing medical equipment and medicines for the army—14 Bolsheviks and 400 Mensheviks, and the Obukhov Works—about 20 Bolsheviks and 500 S.R.s.

The extent of the support for the petty-bourgeois parties at many undertakings, including big plants in Petrograd, Moscow and other cities, was largely explained by the substantial changes in the composition of the industrial proletariat that had occurred during the war. A large number of veteran workers had been called up and their place taken by workers originating from petty-bourgeois strata of the population (artisans, clerks, rural kulaks and so on).

The changed social content of the working class and the prevailing influence of the petty-bourgeois parties showed itself in the returns of the elections to the City and District Soviets.

Once the tsar had been overthrown, the Mensheviks and the S.R.s considered the Revolution to be at an end, and strove to take over the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and to adapt them to the new bourgeois-democratic state.

On February 27, when the insurgent workers and soldiers led by the Bolsheviks were dealing the final blows to tsarism, members of the Menshevik and Trudovik factions in the 4th State Duma gathered in the Taurida Palace, along with the "Workers' Group" of the Central War Industries Committee and several Menshevik officials of the legal trade unions and co-operative organisations. They formed

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the Struggle for the Socialist Revolution in the Period of Dual Power*, Moscow, 1957, pp. 28-29 (Russ. ed.).

a Provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies which addressed an appeal to the Petrograd population. This suggested to the insurgent "troops and factories" that they elect and send deputies to the Taurida Palace. The factories were recommended to send one deputy per thousand workers, and the troops—one per company. Factories with less than a thousand workers could elect deputies, too.<sup>1</sup>

This meant that workers' representation was absolutely uneven, calculated by the Menshevik and S.R. leaders to ensure the predominance in the Soviet of the less class-conscious sections of the workers. It appeared that the big Petrograd factories making up 87% of all workers could send only 424 men to the City Soviet, while the small factories containing the remaining 13% of the total number of workers could elect 422 deputies.<sup>2</sup>

The excessively high representation of the Petrograd garrison was also designed to ensure the dominance of non-proletarian elements in the Petrograd Soviet at its first convocation. The leaders of the Provisional Executive Committee of the Soviet tried to explain the large number of soldiers' deputies by the fact that the numerical strength of the companies in the reserve regiments and other units stationed in Petrograd and the suburbs exceeded the normal level. But there were in addition small command groups in the garrison with the rights of companies which were also given the right to send deputies to the Soviet. The Cossacks, for example, sent one representative per hundred.<sup>3</sup> That is how a soldiers' majority (largely a peasant one) was built up.

The surviving records contain very little information about the way the deputies to the Petrograd Soviet were elected, either at the factories or among the troops. In most minutes there are only the names of those elected, and their party allegiance is not mentioned at all. But one thing is beyond doubt: the Mensheviks and the S.R.s succeeded in pulling through to the Soviet most of their representatives. A. Kondratyev mentions in his reminiscences that those elected to the Soviet from the Novy Lessner factory turned out to be mostly men representing petty-bourgeois parties, with the Menshevik M. I. Broido among them—one of the active participants in the "Workers' Group" at the Central War Industries Committee. And

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, organ of the Committee of Petrograd Journalists, February 27, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> K. Shelavin, *The Working Class and the All-Union Communist Party (B.) in the February Revolution*, Leningrad, 1927, p. 60 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> D. V. Oznobishin, "The Bolshevik Struggle Against the Conciliators in the Petrograd Soviet (March 1917)", *Historical Notes*, Vol. 73, p. 113 (Russ. ed.).

F. A. Lemeshev recalls that the Mensheviks and the S.R.s at the Putilov Works were often elected as "non-party" men.

Bolsheviks were elected unanimously in those places of work where they enjoyed the greatest influence. The first deputies to the Petrograd Soviet from the Vyborg District were M. I. Kalinin, P. F. Boyarshinov, N. P. Komarov and N. Kopylov. The Aivasa workers elected the Bolshevik M. Khakharev, the Munitions Factory workers elected F. Yevseyev, and the Izhora Works elected T. Panov, etc.

The first meeting of the Petrograd Soviet was held in the Taurida Palace on the evening of February 27. There were 125-150 people present, but these included only 45 or 50 workers from the districts. Most of the participants were lawyers, co-operators, and S.R. and Menshevik publicists, all of whom had no mandate from the factories. The arbitrary composition of the first session of the Soviet enabled the Mensheviks and the S.R.s to entrench themselves in the Provisional Executive Committee. The leader of the Menshevik faction in the 4th State Duma, N. S. Chkheidze, became the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Soviet. A. F. Kerensky, a Trudovik (later an S.R.) and M. I. Skobelev, a Menshevik, became deputy chairmen. There were only three Bolsheviks among the eleven members of the Executive Committee at this first meeting, and the Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) noted that lawyers and men of letters prevailed over workers and soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

The Petrograd Soviet met again on February 28. After hearing the report of the Provisional Executive Committee it was decided not to hold re-elections but to co-opt a number of other people of "the left trend" onto the Executive Committee (a further two Bolsheviks were introduced, among others). From that day on the Provisional Executive Committee became, *de facto*, a permanent body, new members joining it only occasionally. The dominance of the representatives of the petty-bourgeois parties in the Petrograd Soviet impeded its work and inhibited the people's own creative initiative. Nevertheless, under the pressure of the revolutionary workers and soldiers and the energetic activities of the Bolshevik deputies, who were closely linked to their electors, the Petrograd Soviet functioned in the early days of the Revolution as a revolutionary organ of state power.

At the Soviet's first session a Military Commission was elected (also called the Headquarters of the Uprising) which organised in-

<sup>1</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, Leningrad, 1957, p. 21 (Russ. ed.).

surgent detachments to guard strategic points (bridges, railway stations, power stations, etc.). These detachments suppressed the activities of counter-revolutionaries.<sup>1</sup> The Petrograd Soviet also formed a Food Commission to organise food supplies to soldiers and civilians.

Measures were taken to maintain revolutionary order in the capital. 10% of Petrograd's workers were to be armed by decision of the inaugural meeting of the Executive Committee, and the places were appointed where the workers' militia units were to be formed and armed.

From the beginning the Petrograd Soviet printed its own newspaper, *Izvestia*. The Bolsheviks were represented on its editorial board by V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich. In order to put a stop to the spreading of slanders it was decided to ban the reactionary bourgeois newspapers: *Zemshchina* (from the word *Zemstvo*—see note on p. 9), *Kolokol* (The Bell), *Russkoye Znamya* (Russian Flag) and others.

Such measures raised the Soviet's prestige among the Petrograd workers and soldiers, and new representatives kept coming forward for inclusion in the Soviet. There were delegates from plants and workshops, and from the troops who had joined the workers. The soldiers told the deputies about the situation in the regiments and announced their wish to "join the brother workers".

It was important at this point to determine at once how the Petrograd Soviet was to develop in the future, since this was crucial for winning over to the side of the revolution not only all the workers but the armed forces too. Guided by Lenin's idea that a Soviet should be a mass political organisation of the proletariat and all democratic sections of the population, the Bolsheviks struggled to create a single Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. But the Mensheviks and the S.R.s tried to separate the soldiers from the workers and rejected in many cases the principle of a united workers' and soldiers' Soviet in the early days of the Revolution.

The revolutionary soldiers themselves, however, supported by the Bolsheviks, succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the Provisional Executive Committee to this idea. N. I. Podvoisky recalls that the Bolsheviks decided to give direction to the movement among the soldiers by suggesting to those who came to them to receive instructions that they go back to their battalions and elect representatives to the Soviet.<sup>2</sup> Ten men representing soldiers and sailors were co-

opted into the Executive Committee on March 1, the Bolsheviks A. N. Paderin and A. D. Sadovsky among them. That is how the Petrograd Soviet's soldiers' section first came into existence.

The first united meeting of the workers' and soldiers' deputies to the Petrograd Soviet on March 1 aroused great interest among the revolutionary people of the capital. There were about a 1,000 present and the meeting was a stormy one. Men representing the regiments of the Litovsky, Preobrazhensky, Semyonovsky and Yegersky Guards, and the air force detachments and other units of the Petrograd garrison castigated the chairman of the State Duma M. V. Rodzyanko and the leader of the Cadet Party P. N. Milyukov for demanding in their speeches at public meetings that revolutionary regiments be disarmed and returned to their barracks. And the Bolshevik deputies called the attention of the Soviet to the counter-revolution that was rearing its head, and to the fact that monarchists were trying to prevent troops who had joined the Revolution from leaving the suburbs for the centre of the city.

The Petrograd Soviet issued an appeal to the soldiers of the garrison. It urged them not to be trapped by provocations, to unite around the Soviet and to keep their arms and not to give them up to their officers. It suggested that troops who had not yet had a chance to send deputies should elect one deputy per company immediately and give them papers and send them to the Soviet.<sup>1</sup> On the next day the Soviet prohibited both the withdrawal of troops from the city without its permission and the disarming of soldiers who had taken part in the armed uprising.

The formation of the Bolshevik faction in the Petrograd Soviet was an important event of the early days of the Soviet's existence. At first it was only a small one, but it was a united group of revolutionary fighters. There were 22 Bolsheviks present at the first meeting of the faction on March 9. By late March the Bolshevik faction had increased to 65 deputies and in another month it included about 100 deputies, all members of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.).<sup>2</sup> The faction formed its own bureau for day-to-day leadership. This bureau originally had the following members: K. Y. Voroshilov, P. V. Dashkevich, S. M. Nakhimson, A. N. Paderin, A. G. Shlyapnikov, with M. D. Krymov, a worker, as Chairman from March to August, 1917.

Workers started forming district Soviets at the same time as they began electing deputies to the Petrograd City Soviet. In late Feb-

<sup>1</sup> S. Mstislavsky, *The Fall of Tsarism*, Leningrad, 1927, pp. 76, 77 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. (Bolsheviks). Minutes*, Moscow, 1958, p. 59 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, March 2, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, p. 22 (Russ. ed.).

ruary the Vyborg, Vasilyevsky Ostrov (Vasilyevsky Island) and Por-khovo District Soviets had been formed, and by early March, the Narva, Kolomenskoye, Petrograd, Kronstadt and Shlisselburg District Soviets.

Some authors hold the view that the district Soviets were formed in accordance with a directive of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet dated February 28.<sup>1</sup> But a more careful analysis of the Soviet's minutes and a scrutiny of deputies' memoirs and other sources enables us to affirm that the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the Executive Committee tried to form in the districts not Soviets of Deputies but bourgeois-democratic "committees of public safety".

The Menshevik B. O. Bogdanov, a member of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, has said that the Provisional Executive Committee agreed on February 28 "not to form Soviets in the districts" but, as transpired later, independent elections had already begun on Vasilyevsky Island to elect a deputy to represent some 500 workers and a company of soldiers jointly.<sup>2</sup> And there are other indications that the Vasilyevsky Island Soviet was formed before any directions had been given by the City Executive Committee. Deputy G. I. Marochkin has written: "After the election to the Petrograd Soviet, comrades began to appear from our Soviet presenting mandates signed and sealed by us. The Petrograd Executive Committee became excited: 'What sort of Soviet has appeared on Vasilyevsky Island?'"<sup>3</sup> Other participants in the February Revolution also confirm that in late February and early March a Soviet of Deputies was formed in the Vasilyevsky Island District which included Bolsheviks and members of petty-bourgeois parties who had been set free from the jails by insurgent workers and soldiers.<sup>4</sup>

Only on March 4, when the Vyborg, Vasilyevsky Island and Narva district Soviets had been formed and had started functioning, did the plenum of the Petrograd City Soviet come back to the question of

<sup>1</sup> *The History of the Civil War in the U.S.S.R.*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1936, p. 119; *The History of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, 1962, p. 19; *The Soviets and the Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry in the October Revolution*, Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1964, p. 11 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Petrograd Soviet of March 18, 1917, State Archives of the October Revolution and Socialist Construction in the Leningrad Region (S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R.), File 7384.

<sup>3</sup> G. I. Marochkin, "On Vasilyevsky Island in 1917" (Recollections about the Vasilyevsky Island Soviet), *Krasnaya Letopis* (Red Records) No. 1 (22), 1927, p. 94 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Memoirs of the Deputies of the Vasilyevsky Island District Soviet of Petrograd in 1917*, Leningrad Party Archives, File 4000.

organising the districts. It was then impossible to prevent the holding of elections, even more so to abolish the existing district Soviets, and the City Soviet adopted the decision for the city to be divided into various districts and "each to form a Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies".<sup>1</sup>

The formation of the district Soviets took place in an atmosphere of acute struggle between the different parties. Just as had happened when the Provisional Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet was being organised, the Mensheviks and the S.R.s strove to seize control of the district Soviets. The inaugural meeting of the Soviet of Deputies of the Vyborg District, consisting of representatives of local factories and workshops, was told that its Executive Committee had already been "elected" and that Social-Democrats (Mensheviks) had been appointed Chairman and Secretary of the Soviet. This was a gross violation of the will of the electorate, who had sent only 14 Mensheviks and S.R.s to the Soviet, which had a total number of some 150 deputies, the figure rising later to 300.<sup>2</sup> And it was only by dint of tremendous effort that the Bolshevik faction of the Vyborg Soviet (consisting of I. S. Ashkenasi, I. F. Antyukhin, V. Y. Kayurov, N. O. Kuchmenko, I. M. Gordienko, I. G. Gavrilov, S. L. Lapshin, I. D. Chugurin and others) was able to get rid of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s in the leading bodies of the Soviet.

Again, there were originally more Bolsheviks than Mensheviks in both the Petrograd and Kolomenskoye District Soviets but the Mensheviks formed a bloc with the S.R.s and in this way underpinned their positions.

The fact that the views of the Bolsheviks and those of the representatives of the petty-bourgeois parties concerning the Soviets were diametrically opposed was revealed in their attitudes towards elections. The S.R.s and the Mensheviks, regarding the Soviets as temporary and non-governmental organisations, attempted to lower their significance and to convince the revolutionary people that it was more important "to show care for the Zemstvos and the City and District Dumas"<sup>3</sup> than for the Soviets. The Mensheviks declared to the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Vasilyevsky Island

<sup>1</sup> *The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Minutes of Meetings of the Executive Committee and the Bureau of the Executive Committee*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1925, p. 11 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, p. 56 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> The City and District Dumas were the bourgeois executive bodies in the cities both in tsarist Russia and under the Provisional Government. Formally they were supposed to represent public self-government, but in content they were auxiliary state institutions in charge of municipal services.

District Soviet on March 26 that the Soviets of Deputies would exist only "pending elections to the Duma".<sup>1</sup>

But from the very beginning of the February Revolution the Bolsheviks valued the Soviets highly as self-acting organisations of working people designed to unite the workers and soldiers into the political army of the future socialist revolution. The minutes of the district committees of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and the reminiscences of active participants in the Revolution enable us to get an idea of how the Bolsheviks worked to build up district Soviets in Petrograd.

A meeting of Bolsheviks, the first after the February Revolution, was held on March 2 at the Putilov Works. The returns of the elections to the Petrograd City Soviet both in the plant and in the Narva District were under discussion. The participants spoke most of all about the district Soviet. The Putilov deputies to the Petrograd City Soviet agreed to form their district Soviet in the same way as had been done in 1905. The Narva District Soviet began to function on March 3.

The question of electing representatives to the district Soviet came under discussion in the Kolomenskoye District on May 25 at a general meeting of Bolsheviks, which nominated two candidates for election.<sup>2</sup> The Kolpino District Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) adopted a decision on May 6 to organise a Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies in Kolpino. And the Party organisation was mandated to carry through this decision at a meeting of the workers of the Izhora Works. At the same time Bolshevik T. Panov was commissioned by the District Party Committee to go to the village of Slavyanka to involve the peasants there in the work of the Soviet.<sup>3</sup>

A study of all the documents relating to the organisation of the Petrograd City Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies as well as to the district Soviets shows how right Lenin was when he said that "in February 1917 the masses had created the Soviets.... It was the great creative spirit of the people, which had passed through the bitter experience of 1905 and had been made wise by it, that gave rise to this form of proletarian power."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Petrograd District Soviets in 1917*, Vol. I, Moscow-Leningrad, 1964, p. 84 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the General Meetings of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Members of the 2nd City District of Petrograd*, Leningrad Party Archives, File 1817.

<sup>3</sup> *Minutes of the Kolpino District Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, Leningrad Party Archives, File 2315.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 90.

## 2. THE FORMATION OF THE SOVIETS IN MOSCOW

Moscow heard of the successful uprising of the Petrograd proletariat and the capital's garrison on February 27. On the same day the Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)<sup>1</sup> issued a leaflet calling on the working people of Moscow and the Moscow region to support the Petrograd workers and soldiers by a general strike and mass demonstrations. "Comrades!" the leaflet declared, "Down tools! Soldiers! Remember that the fate of the people is being decided now! All out onto the streets! Everybody under the red banners of the revolution! Elect representatives to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies!"<sup>2</sup>

On February 28 almost all of Moscow's factories and workshops were on strike, trams were at a stop, and no newspapers appeared. A general political strike began. The Moscow City Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) suggested to the workers that they elect one deputy to the Soviet for every 300 workers, and that they form factory committees at all plants and also organise themselves at district level.<sup>3</sup>

A Draft Mandate to the Deputies Who Were Elected to the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies was issued by the Moscow City Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and posted at factories and in the streets and squares. It stated that the Moscow Soviet "must unite with the revolutionary organisations of other places and form together with them a Provisional Revolutionary Government".

Bolsheviks were elected to the Soviets at places of work which had preserved their Party organisations during the war. More than 2,000 people attended a meeting called by the Party cell of the Mikhelson Works. The workers elected as Bolshevik Deputies to the Moscow Soviet Olga Gorbachik, Ivan Volkov, and Nikolai Strelkov.<sup>4</sup> K. V. Ukhanov and other Bolsheviks were elected to the Soviet from the Dynamo Plant, which had a strong Party organisation. The Prokhorov Textile Mill elected 9 Bolsheviks out of 13 deputies.

<sup>1</sup> In Moscow, besides the City Party Committee there were the Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) which guided the work of Guberna Party organisations of the Central Industrial Area, and the Moscow District Committee which headed the activity of the Moscow Guberna Party organisations (excluding Moscow proper).

<sup>2</sup> *The Bolsheviks in the Years of the Imperialist War*, Moscow, 1939, p. 181 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Preparation for and the Victory of the October Revolution in Moscow*, Documents and Materials, Moscow, 1957, p. 11 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *From February to October in Moscow*, Moscow, 1923, Issue 1, p. 186 (Russ. ed.).

Moscow's Mensheviks were against organising a Soviet of Workers' Deputies at first. They suggested that the workers should confine themselves to the election of representatives to "generally democratic" district self-governing bodies. A group of Mensheviks led by P. N. Kolokolnikov urged that "the mistake of 1905 should not be repeated and Soviets should not be formed".<sup>1</sup> But as the Revolution developed the Mensheviks changed their tactics. On the evening of February 27 members of the Workers' Group of the War Industries Committee, together with the petty-bourgeois party leaders, gathered in the premises of the Moscow City Duma, where, following Petrograd's example, they formed a so-called Provisional Revolutionary Committee and called on the workers to elect deputies to the City Soviet.

On March 1 the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies held its inaugural meeting with delegates from 51 factories present, the majority of whom were Mensheviks or S.R.s. Out of the 625 deputies elected to the Soviet by Moscow workers in the early days of the February Revolution 250 were Bolsheviks or sympathisers.<sup>2</sup> The Menshevik A. M. Nikitin was elected Chairman of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, but in a few days he was replaced by another Menshevik, L. M. Khinchuk. The deputies elected the Bolshevik V. P. Nogin, a well-known man in the labour movement, as Deputy Chairman. The Presidium of the Soviet contained two Bolsheviks, two Mensheviks and one S.R.

The Bolsheviks then formed their own faction in the Moscow Soviet and made an announcement to this effect at a combined meeting of the workers' and soldiers' Soviets on March 12.<sup>3</sup> This faction held its first meeting on March 19. Bolshevik deputies to the City Soviet attended, and members of the Moscow City Committee and the Regional Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) were also present, 51 people altogether. They elected a Bureau of the faction, including prominent workers of the Moscow Party organisation V. P. Nogin, M. P. Vladimirov, V. A. Obukh, D. M. Pevunov and Y. N. Ignatov,<sup>4</sup> to direct the activities of the Bolsheviks in the Soviet in accordance

with Party policy. By the end of March the Bolshevik faction numbered over 140 deputies.<sup>1</sup>

Following the example of the Bolsheviks, factions were also formed by the Mensheviks and the S.R.s. There were 126 deputies in the Menshevik faction in April and 67 S.R.s.<sup>2</sup> Somewhat later a fourth faction was formed—of the *Unity* group representatives. But this was small in number and unstable, usually voting together with the S.R.s and Mensheviks but on some questions supporting the Bolsheviks.

The process of the formation of the Soviets in Moscow differed from that in Petrograd. Here independent Soviets of workers' deputies and of soldiers' deputies were formed. This had its reasons. A directive letter from the Moscow S.R. Committee to its rank-and-file organisations (March 1917) said that the Party's leadership considered the Soviets of Workers' Deputies to be temporary bodies and therefore found it more desirable that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies and the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies should exist separately.<sup>3</sup> This was in line with the interests of the big bourgeoisie. The Moscow City Duma and other bourgeois governing bodies were trying to isolate the soldiers from the workers in order to hinder the formation of an alliance between the workers and the peasants.

The Bolsheviks on the other hand attempted to merge the revolutionary energies of the workers and the soldiers into a single stream. At the second session of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies the Bolsheviks suggested the introduction into the Soviet of deputies representing the troops of the Moscow garrison. The Military Commission of the Soviet, led by V. A. Obukh and P. G. Smidovich, was instructed to achieve the adoption of the appropriate decision at the Moscow Regional Army Headquarters.

A striving for unity with the revolutionary workers was apparent among certain sections of the soldiers but this was met with the serious resistance of the officers. The Commander of the Moscow Military District, Colonel Gruzinov, refused to talk to the Military Commission of the Moscow Soviet and tried to set up obstacles to "the soldiers having any contact with politics", i.e., to their participation in elections to Soviets.

In order to paralyse the counter-revolutionary actions of the officers, the Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet of Workers'

<sup>1</sup> Y. P. Tretyakova, "February 1917 in Moscow", *Voprosy Istorii* (Problems of History) No. 3, 1957, p. 78 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S. Kukushkin, *The Moscow Soviet in 1917*, Moscow, 1957, pp. 16-17 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> Y. Ignatov, *The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, Moscow, 1925, p. 36 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Party Archives of the Institute of Party History of the Moscow City and Moscow Regional Committees of the C.P.S.U., File 3.

<sup>1</sup> State Archives of the October Revolution and Socialist Construction in the Moscow Region (S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R.), File 66.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the C.C., C.P.S.U. (C.P.A.I.M.L), File 275.

Deputies prepared and distributed among the soldiers a Draft Order to the Moscow Garrison. The soldiers were advised to elect committees immediately in all companies, regiments, battalions, squadrons, individual services and military departments, and also to elect to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies one representative for every company or other unit equal to it in numerical strength. The appearance of this document compelled the Command of the Moscow Military District to allow the soldiers to elect company, regimental and other committees, and to take part in the election of deputies to Soviets. The soldiers' representatives elected on the basis of the Draft Order to the Moscow Garrison met in Moscow on March 4. The delegates decided to regard this meeting as the Provisional Organisation Committee of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. The tasks of the Committee were outlined as follows: to form a permanent organisation (Soviet) of the soldiers of the Moscow garrison which would be able to make clear the soldiers' attitude to the events of the day, to establish relations with the Military Command, and to call an inaugurating meeting of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. The Provisional Committee elected a Presidium authorised to set up departments to deal with the various aspects of the life of the soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

As time went by the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies acquired more and more new representatives. It included 600 men by March 7 and represented practically all the military units of the Moscow garrison. A 120-strong Executive Committee was elected alongside the 20-strong Presidium. The Presidium included 13 Mensheviks and S.R.s, 3 Bolsheviks and 4 non-party people.

The Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies began its activities in a somewhat complicated situation. The Command of the Moscow Military District did its best to prevent the spreading of the influence of the Soviets and the soldiers' committees. For this purpose such "democratic" bodies as the Soviet of Officers' Deputies, the Soviet of Cossack Troops, the semi-monarchist Soviet of 33 and the like were set up under the auspices of the Command of the Moscow Military District to retain the Moscow garrison in the camp of counter-revolution and to isolate the soldiers from the workers.

The struggle between the mass self-governing soldiers' organisations and the counter-revolutionary "soviet" and "unions" began immediately after the February Revolution. The first meeting of the

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66; *Soldat-grazhdanin* (Citizen Soldier), Moscow, March 15, 1917.

Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies on March 4 decided that it alone could be the revolutionary body to express the interests of the soldiers of the Moscow garrison.<sup>1</sup>

To form an alliance between the workers and soldiers of Moscow it was essential to establish close links and correct relations between the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. The Bolsheviks were the first to take action. P. G. Smidovich, a member of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies was commissioned to join the Executive Committee and the Military Commission of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies as a representative.<sup>2</sup> And on March 10, at a joint session of the Executive Committees of both Soviets, the question of contacts between the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies was discussed. The parties agreed to hold joint sessions of the Executive Committees of both Soviets, to hold joint meetings of the Soviets and also to send two delegates from the Presidium of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies to all meetings of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and, vice versa, two representatives from the Soviet of Workers' Deputies to all meetings of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies.

The Bolsheviks continued to work for still closer relations between the two Soviets. The best solution would have been a joint Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, as in Petrograd. But the stubborn obstruction of the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies with the support of the conciliators' majority in the Soviet of Workers' Deputies prevented the union of the mass political organisations of the workers and the soldiers. As a result they led a separate existence right up to the victory of the October Revolution.

The Bolshevik organisations regarded their most important tasks to be those of increasing their influence over the mass of the soldiers to unite them around the Soviets. With this aim in view the Moscow Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) formed a Military Bureau in the middle of March which was included within the Moscow Committee and given the same rights as a district committee. The Bureau was led by the Bolsheviks O. A. Varentsova, V. N. Vasilyevsky, N. I. Smirnov, A. Y. Arosev, I. N. Chinenov, F. O. Kryukov and others. Y. M. Yaroslavsky was also active in the Bureau after he returned from exile in June 1917.

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, March 4, 1917 (S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 684).

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, March 8, 1917.

The members of the Military Bureau penetrated into the barracks, held meetings, gave political talks, organised mass meetings of soldiers, and tried to influence the company and regimental committees and to form Bolshevik factions in them.

Work among the Moscow garrison was again discussed by the Moscow Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) on April 11. It was then decided to form a Bolshevik faction in the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, comprising the Bolshevik deputies to the Soviet together with members of the Party's Military Bureau, I. N. Chinenov, Zh. A. Maurer, F. O. Kryukov and some others.<sup>1</sup>

District Soviets were formed at the same time as the two City Soviets. Their number was not fixed. In early March the Moscow Soviet Executive Committee decided to set up eight districts in the city. Later there were 10 districts, rising again to 11 in May. In addition to the district Soviets, 5 sub-district Soviets of Deputies were created.<sup>2</sup>

The Rogozhsko-Simonovsky District Soviet of Workers' Deputies was the first to be set up. It began to function on March 4. Two days later a meeting of representatives elected to the Butyrsky District Soviet was held. The Lefortovo District Soviet held its first meeting on March 4. By the end of April there had also been formed the Gorodskoy, Zamoskvorechye (across the Moskva River—opposite the Kremlin and beyond), the Zheleznodorozhny (Railway), Presnya, Sokolniki and Khamovniki District Soviets.

The conciliators did their best to turn the district Soviets into tools of the S.R.-Menshevik majority of the City Soviet. A special department in charge of the districts was set up in the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies in March 1917. It not only informed the district Soviets of the activities of the City Soviet, but tried to carry through S.R. and Menshevik policy in each locality. But the S.R.s and Mensheviks did not succeed in dominating completely and controlling the proletarian district Soviets.

Unlike the City Soviet of Workers' Deputies some of the district Soviets were formed as joint Soviets from the start, i.e., they included people representing the Army. This was the case in the Zamoskvorechye, Sokolniki and Lefortovo districts.

On April 25 the plenum of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies discussed the state of organisational work in the districts. V. A. Avanesov, speaking on behalf of the Lefortovo District So-

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Moscow City Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), April 11, 1917 (Party Archives of the Moscow City and Regional Committees of the C.P.S.U., File 3).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66.

viet, said: "Our district has succeeded in attracting the soldiers and we are now called The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies."<sup>1</sup> M. P. Vladimirov, representing the Sokolniki District, told the meeting of the formation of a joint Soviet in his district and pointed out that "the joint activities of the workers' and soldiers' deputies are to the advantage of the whole district". The successful experience of the Bolsheviks in forming joint district Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in Moscow was of great importance for the further advance of the Revolution.

The Moscow district Soviets were closely linked with the factory committees, with the workers at the factories and the soldiers in the reserve regiments. Two leaders of the Rogozhsko-Simonovsky District Soviet, K. V. Ukhakov and N. Borisov, write in their memoirs that decisions on the most important issues were usually adopted by the Soviet only after preliminary discussions at factories and workshops. Some district Soviets—the Zamoskvorechye, Zheleznodorozhny, Rogozhsko-Simonovsky and Lefortovo—formed Bolshevik factions in the spring of 1917. This made the work of the Soviets much more lively and enabled them to work in a revolutionary way.

### 3. THE FORMATION OF SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

The victory of the February bourgeois-democratic Revolution in Petrograd and Moscow began the spread of the Soviet form of political organisation of the working people throughout the country. The towns and workers' settlements of the Central Industrial Area led the process of organising Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. There were a number of reasons for this.

The Central Area of Russia concentrated many branches of industry: the metal-working, machine-building, textile and other industries. Thirty-four per cent of all industrial workers were employed here before World War I. The number of workers (particularly in the defence industry) increased considerably during the war, metal workers alone more than doubling in number.<sup>2</sup>

The workers of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kostroma, Tver and Nizhni-Novgorod took an active part in the 1905-07 Revolution, and they

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> L. S. Gaponenko, *The Russian Working Class in the Period of Preparation for the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, 1964, pp. 37-38 (Russ. ed.).

preserved and added to their revolutionary traditions. Soviets began to appear in the towns of the Central Industrial Area immediately after the February Revolution. A demonstration 30,000-strong organised by the Town Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) marched through Ivanovo-Voznesensk on March 2, 1917. The Bolsheviks explained to the workers the revolutionary events that had taken place in Petrograd and urged them to elect deputies to form a Soviet. The first elections were held at factories on the same day. Workers elected 105 deputies, including 65 Bolsheviks.<sup>1</sup>

On March 3 the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet of Workers' Deputies held its first meeting with 57 deputies from the factories, 8 from educational establishments and 15 from the town's garrison. The Presidium of the Soviet was elected with the Bolsheviks V. P. Kuznetsov and V. Y. Stepanov as Chairman and Deputy Chairman.<sup>2</sup>

The Ivanovo-Voznesensk garrison was rather small, which is why no separate Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies was formed. Instead, men representing Reserve Regiment No. 199 joined the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, which then came to be known as the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

The workers of Tula downed tools on March 2, gathered in the local Kremlin and marched to the Governor-General's house demanding the liberation of political prisoners. The town authorities wanted to use the local garrison to suppress this uprising. But they did not succeed. Reserve Regiment (No. 30), stationed in Tula at the time, which had a strong Bolshevik organisation led by Ensign N. A. Rudnev, joined the insurgent workers on the night of March 2-3. The tsarist authorities were arrested and the workers of the munitions factories began to form their Soviet on the same day (March 3). One hundred and twenty-one men were elected to the Tula Soviet of Workers' Deputies in a short time, most of them Mensheviks or S.R.s.<sup>3</sup> The Tula garrison set up its own Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies and Presidium with the Bolsheviks in the majority. On March 5 the Soviet adopted a decision to form a soldiers' section in the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

The Nizhni-Novgorod Soviet of Workers' Deputies was created on the initiative of the people of the Kanavino and Sormovo districts. On March 2 a Provisional Soviet of Workers' Deputies was

<sup>1</sup> *The Ivanovo-Voznesensk Bolsheviks in the Period of Preparation for and the Carrying Through of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Collection of Documents, Ivanovo, 1947, pp. 49-50 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *1917 in the Ivanovo-Voznesensk District (Record of Events)*, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, 1927, pp. 17-18 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

formed with Bolshevik V. N. Losev as Chairman, and within six days a permanent Presidium had been elected, consisting of two Bolsheviks and three Mensheviks.<sup>1</sup> The Nizhni-Novgorod Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies was set up two days later on March 4.

Revolutionary events in Vladimir developed with the active participation of workers and soldiers from Moscow who arrived there on March 3. The insurgents arrested the Governor and disarmed the police. Reserve Regiments Nos. 82 and 215 formed a 65-man Soviet of garrison soldiers and elected an Executive Committee of 20.<sup>2</sup> The representatives of other army units were later added to the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies of the Vladimir garrison and it became the Uyezd Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>3</sup> This Soviet began to organise the soldiers, the peasants and the workers, and in early April the first Uyezd Peasants' Congress was convened, and some time later a congress of representatives of the plants and workshops of Vladimir Uyezd.

In May 1917 a Gubernia Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies was formed in Vladimir to represent all the army units stationed on the territory of Vladimir Gubernia. This Soviet's duties were to organise regimental and company committees and to watch over their work.<sup>4</sup>

Independent Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies or Soviets of Military Deputies were formed as a rule in gubernia towns, and in some uyezd towns where the garrisons were of any size. This happened in Voronezh, Nizhni-Novgorod, Kaluga, Kostroma, Tver, Tula, Ryazan and other towns of the Central Industrial Area.

The Tver Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies represented about 30,000 men. All the orders and instructions of the Command of the Moscow Military District concerning the re-forming or movement of troops of the Tver garrison were considered valid only after they had been approved by the Tver Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>5</sup> This Soviet also formed a commission to organise the peasants of Tver Gubernia. The firm and independent position of the Tver Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies was accounted for by the strong Bolshevik organisation that existed there led by Ensign A. Y. Arosev.

<sup>1</sup> M. Lyubovikov, I. Nechayev, M. Shniprov, *1917-1920. Chronicle of Revolutionary Events in the Gorky Area*, Gorky, 1932, p. 17 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

<sup>3</sup> N. Shahanov, *1917 in Vladimir Gubernia. Chronicle of Events*, Vladimir, 1927, p. 30 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> The Vladimir Soviet of Workers' Deputies was not formed until some time later.

<sup>5</sup> *The Preparation for and the Carrying Through of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Tver Gubernia*, Collection of Documents, Kalinin, 1960, pp. 183-84 (Russ. ed.).

The Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies were self-acting bodies formed spontaneously with no unified system of representation. The Tver soldiers, for instance, elected one deputy per half-company (150-180 men), and their officers—one per company and two per battery.<sup>1</sup> In Narva, where Reserve Infantry Regiment No. 285 was stationed, two men from each company or commands were elected to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>2</sup> Again, the Vladimir Gubernia Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, consisting of men from all the army units stationed in the gubernia, was elected on the basis of six deputies from each reserve regiment and three from each detachment of the volunteers' corps.

According to the surviving information the country had 116 Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies in March 1917.<sup>3</sup>

The Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P. (B.), the Moscow District Bolshevik Committee, and the Bolshevik Deputies of the Moscow, Nizhni-Novgorod and other town Soviets put in a great amount of work to organise Soviets in other places. In March and April 1917, representatives of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies visited Orekhovo-Zuyevo, Bogorodsk, Alexandrov, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Vladimir, Tula, Kaluga, Ryazan, Tver, Kostroma, Nizhni-Novgorod, Voronezh, Saratov, Astrakhan, Rostov-on-Don, Taganrog, Kharkov, Odessa, Yekaterinoslav, Theodosia, Poltava, Kishinev, Smolensk, Orsha, etc.<sup>4</sup>

By the end of March 1917 the Central Industrial Area had Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in more than 70 towns and factory settlements, covering a million and a half men and women workers.<sup>5</sup>

In the Volga Area the Soviets of Saratov, Samara, Kazan and other industrial centres played a leading part in promoting the Soviet form of working people's organisation.

The Saratov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was formed on March 2. It originally comprised 120 deputies, including 40 Bolsheviks.<sup>6</sup> The Bolshevik V. P. Milyutin was elected Chairman of the

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>2</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Estonia*, Collection of Documents and Materials, Tallinn, 1958, p. 29 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> I. I. Mints, *The History of Great October*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1967, pp. 799 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Taken from Materials of the Provincial Department of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies (S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683) (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> Z. L. Serebryakova, "The Moscow Regional Association of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the Period of Preparation for the Great October" in *The Soviets and the Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry in the October Revolution*, p. 36 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>6</sup> *The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, Minutes, Moscow, 1958, p. 156 (Russ. ed.).

Executive Committee, and a leader of the Saratov Bolshevik organisation, M. I. Vasilyev-Yuzhin, was elected his deputy. The Soviet immediately established contact with the towns of the Saratov Gubernia, sent its representatives to the different uyezds, and prepared the convocation of a gubernia conference of Soviets. A team of agitators was organised to work in the gubernia: men representing the Saratov Soviet went to Atkarsk, Balashov, Volsk, Rtishchevo and Khvalynsk, where they helped workers and soldiers to set up their own Soviets.<sup>1</sup>

The election of deputies to the Samara Soviet took place during the last ten days of March and revealed the considerable influence of the Bolsheviks. In face of the opposition of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties, V. V. Kuibyshev was elected Chairman of the Presidium of the Samara Soviet of Workers' Deputies and head of its editorial and publishing commission. S. I. Deryabina, a Bolshevik well-known in the Volga Area, headed the propaganda commission, and the Bolshevik A. P. Galaktionov—the Soviet's trade commission. N. M. Shvernik was elected to the Soviet by the workers of the Samara Pipe Factory.<sup>2</sup> A Soviet of Military Deputies was set up at the same time. V. K. Blukher carried on active work in it.

The working people of the Don Military Region, the Kuban Area and the North Caucasus also followed in the steps of the Central Area of the country and began to form Soviets. In March 1917 Rostov-on-Don, Taganrog, Novocherkassk, Armavir, Yekaterinodar, Stavropol, Novorossiisk, Sochi, Kislovodsk, Grozny and Vladikavkaz all organised their Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

The process of setting up Soviets proceeded rapidly in the Urals. According to the far from complete records the Soviets here numbered about 100 by the end of March.<sup>3</sup>

The mass political organisations of the Urals working class were formed in a complex situation. The Bolsheviks had been the main party in the Soviets from the beginning of the Revolution, at the big factories of Yekaterinburg, and in many mining townships. But

<sup>1</sup> A. I. Razgon, "On the Composition of the Soviets of the Lower Volga Area in March-April 1917" in *The Soviets and the Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry in the October Revolution*, pp. 84, 85 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> I. I. Blumental, *The 1917-1918 Revolution in Samara Gubernia*, Chronicle of Events, Vol. I, Samara, 1927, p. 43; and *The Struggle for the Soviet Power in the Samara Gubernia*, Collection of Documents, Kuibyshev, 1957, p. 18 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>3</sup> From *The History of the Urals Working Class*, Collection of Articles, Perm, 1961, p. 291 (Russ. ed.).

in the gubernia centres (Perm, Ufa and other towns), where most of the population was made up of handicraftsmen, artisans, and various other non-proletarian elements, the petty-bourgeois parties held sway. Here they worked to bring the mass movement for establishing Soviets under their influence and to direct it along reformist paths.

The Bolsheviks held their first legal meeting in Yekaterinburg on March 5. A city committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) was elected and a decision to form Soviets taken.<sup>1</sup> The Bolsheviks called meetings at factories and workshops to advise the workers to elect deputies. The Yekaterinburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies held an inaugural meeting on March 19 at which 120 attended. The Bolshevik P. M. Bykov became the Soviet's Chairman.

The Bolsheviks led the Urals Soviets in Alapayevsk, Asha, Verkhnaya Tura, Lysva, Nevyansk, Revda, Minyar, Sim and Ust-Katav from the earliest days of the February Revolution. S. M. Tsvilling, a well-known Bolshevik Party worker, was elected Chairman of the Chelyabinsk Soviet. And the Bolshevik A. A. Korostelev headed the Orenburg Soviet.

In the towns of Siberia the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies were mostly formed early in March. Their early formation was aided by the fact that memories of 1905 were very much alive among the workers and peasants, when Krasnoyarsk and Chita had their own "republics". Besides, many experienced workers of the Bolshevik Party were exiled to Siberia after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution and had carried Marxist propaganda there. After the overthrow of the tsar they took an active part in building Soviets.

On February 28 the Krasnoyarsk Bolsheviks issued a leaflet which called on the working people to form Soviets. A big demonstration took place in the city on March 3. The insurgent workers and the soldiers of the No. 4 Company of Reserve Regiment No. 15 (led by Ensign S. G. Lazo) disarmed the police, arrested the Governor and the city and railway gendarmerie, and occupied the post and telegraph offices.<sup>2</sup> Deputies were elected on the same day and, following the 1905 experience, a Krasnoyarsk united Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was formed at once, similar in structure to the Petrograd Soviet.

<sup>1</sup> *The Urals Bolsheviks in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Collection of Documents and Materials, Sverdlovsk, 1957, p. 9 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Krasnoyarsk Soviet (March 1917-June 1918)*, Collection of Documents, Krasnoyarsk, 1960, pp. 10-11 (Russ. ed.).

In the first months of the Revolution the Krasnoyarsk Soviet was one of the few where the influence of the Bolsheviks prevailed. The prominent underground revolutionary Y. F. Dubrovinsky was Chairman, and his deputies were the Bolsheviks T. I. Markovsky and B. Z. Shumyatsky. A. I. Okulov, another Bolshevik, led the workers' section of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet, and S. G. Lazo—the soldiers' section.

Former political exiles were at the head of many Siberian Soviets after the February Revolution. Late in March the Yakutsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was formed with Y. M. Yaroslavsky as Chairman. The Minusinsk Soviet was led by Y. P. Gaven, the Yeniseisk Soviet—by V. N. Yakovlev, the Kansk Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies—by N. N. Korostelev, and the Verkhneudinsk (Ulan-Ude) Soviet—by V. M. Serov.

In addition to Krasnoyarsk, Omsk, Chita, Verkhneudinsk and Vladivostok also formed united Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' (or Army) Deputies. But in most Siberian and Far Eastern towns, where there were large garrisons, Soviets of Soldiers' and Cossacks' Deputies were formed alongside Soviets of Workers' Deputies.<sup>1</sup>

Tomsk formed three independent Soviets almost simultaneously: a Soviet of Workers' Deputies, a Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies and a Soviet of Officers' Deputies. But the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies played the leading part in the public life of both the city and the gubernia of Tomsk. It represented 70,000 men, who had elected 124 deputies to the Soviet.

The Bolsheviks, led by N. N. Yakovlev, were largely in charge of the organising and political work of the Soviet of Deputies of the Tomsk garrison. The soldiers' Soviet enjoyed great authority not only in the city but in the areas around it. A newspaper, *Znamya Revolutsii* (The Banner of Revolution), with a circulation of 4,000, was specially printed for the soldiers.

Omsk received a cable about the Petrograd events on March 2. The United R.S.D.L.P. Committee immediately held meetings at the town's factories and garrison agitating for the election of representatives to form a Soviet. The Party's call received an enthusiastic response from both the workers and the soldiers. The Omsk Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies held its first meeting on March 3, when it elected an Executive Committee. The S.R.s and Mensheviks occupied most of the seats in the Soviet and on the Executive Committee. But the internationalist K. A. Popov, who was later to be-

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of the Sessions of the Second West Siberian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, August 11-20, 1917, 1917, p. 29 (Russ. ed.).

come a leading Bolshevik in the struggle for Soviet power in Siberia, was elected Chairman of the Omsk Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies.<sup>1</sup>

The railway workers took the initiative in setting up a Soviet in Chita. The main repair factory workers held a big meeting on March 4 with workers from other factories attending. The troops of the local garrison held meetings at the same time. The inaugural session of the Chita Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies took place on March 5 with 54 workers' representatives present, and 132 from the soldiers, Cossacks and officers. They elected an Executive Committee of 28 members (14 from the workers and 14 from the soldiers).<sup>2</sup> The Chita Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was the organiser of all the Soviets along the Zabaikalskaya Railway Line (to the east of Lake Baikal).

In Vladivostok a mixed meeting of Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and S.R.s was held on March 3 with workers and employees participating. They adopted a decision to start forming a Soviet. The S.R.s insisted that the workers and soldiers should form their own separate Soviets but this proposal was overruled. The meeting elected a Bureau of seven, including five Bolsheviks, to organise the elections, which were held at factories, in the shipyards and in Army and Navy units on March 4. The Soviet was inaugurated at a meeting of workers', soldiers' and sailors' deputies and proclaimed to be the sole revolutionary centre of Vladivostok and the area around it. 180 deputies of the Vladivostok Soviet out of the total of 750 followed the Bolsheviks in March 1917.<sup>3</sup>

In the North-West and in the Northern areas of the country Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Deputies were organised almost everywhere early in March.

At the time of the February Revolution large parts of the Petrograd, Pskov, Novgorod, Archangel and Olonets gubernias comprised the rear areas of the Northern Front. This fact affected the formation of the mass political organisations. As a rule, it was the revolutionary-minded soldiers and junior officers who took the initiative in forming Soviets.

The Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies of Reserve Regiment No. 177 was the first to be organised (on March 2) in Novgorod. Its Chairman

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66.

<sup>2</sup> S. Tsyplkin, *The Far East Bolsheviks on the Path to October*, Khabarovsk, 1934, pp. 48-49 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> L. Belikova, *The Struggle of the Bolsheviks to Establish and Strengthen Soviet Power in Primorye (the Maritime Area), 1917-1918*, Vladivostok, 1957, pp. 23-24 (Russ. ed.).

was the Bolshevik A. D. Alexeyev. Somewhat later the Novgorod Soviet of Workers' Deputies emerged.<sup>1</sup> In Pskov a sponsoring group was set up in the early days of the Revolution which proposed that elections to a Pskov Soviet should be held at all places of work and in all Army units. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s secured most of the seats.

The formation of Soviets in the areas behind the front lines was of great political importance. As bodies established by revolutionary soldiers, these Soviets did not confine themselves to the sphere of Army life but were an active force in influencing the course of events in both the cities and the rural areas. The anonymous writer of a note on the situation in the Dvinsk Military District observed that the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies played the major part in maintaining law and order throughout the area. The Soviets' decisions were regarded as binding by the overwhelming majority of Army units and garrisons in the district. And the soldiers' organisations displayed a tendency to unite with the Soviets of Workers' Deputies.<sup>2</sup>

The abolition of the remnants of tsarism and the formation of Soviets and Revolutionary Committees in the localities went on with the active participation of the Bolshevik deputies of the Petrograd City Soviet and District Soviets, and of leading Party bodies and Bolshevik cells in the Army.

At the request of the Olonets Metal Works the Petrograd Soviet sent Deputy A. A. Kopyatkevich, a Bolshevik, to Petrozavodsk, where he did much to organise the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies there. The Petrozavodsk Soviet spread its activity along the whole of the Murmansk Railway Line area, where troops were stationed. The railway workers employed at the workshops and railway stations had their representatives in the Soviet.<sup>3</sup>

In order to consolidate the gains of the second bourgeois-democratic revolution and to ensure its growth into a socialist revolution it was important to add momentum to the movement for electing Soviets, Soldiers' and Sailors' Committees on the Baltic Fleet and to extend the influence of the Bolsheviks at the principal bases of the fleet, Kronstadt and Helsingfors.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Krasnaya Letopis* (Red Records) No. 3 (24), 1927, pp. 35, 37.

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia After the Overthrow of Tsarism, February-March*, Moscow, 1957, p. 611 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Organisation and Building of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, Collection of Documents, Moscow, 1928, p. 26; and *Establishing Soviet Power in Karelia*, Collection of Documents, Petrozavodsk, 1957, pp. 38-39 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Helsingfors—now Helsinki, capital of Finland. Finland, formerly oppressed by tsarism, acquired its independence after the victory of Soviet power in Russia.

At one of the first meetings of the Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) after the February Revolution it was decided to send a number of Petrograd Bolsheviks to work in Kronstadt. These included B. A. Zhemchuzhin and P. I. Smirnov, both members of the Petersburg Committee. They were joined later by A. F. Ilyin-Zhenevsky and B. A. Breslaw. And the Vyborg District Soviet sent Bolshevik deputies Gordienko, Dingelshtedt, Nesterov and others to organise political work among the sailors.

At first the petty-bourgeois parties of the S.R.s, the Mensheviks and the Anarchists held most of the seats in the Kronstadt Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies. But the Bolshevik agitation, combined with their own experience, soon showed the workers and sailors which party was really working to defend their interests. By late April there were already 60 Bolsheviks out of the 280 members of the Kronstadt Soviet, and they formed their own faction within it.<sup>1</sup>

The insurgent sailors of Helsingfors disarmed and arrested their officers and set up revolutionary committees on board their ships. The Helsingfors Soviet of Workers', Sailors' and Soldiers' Deputies was organised on March 4. The sailors' section of the Helsingfors Soviet was the most active part of it. Its activities came noticeably under the influence of the Bolsheviks I. Y. Dybenko, E. A. Bers, N. N. Khovrin and others.<sup>2</sup>

At the Northern Front, the 12th Army and the troops of the Abo-Aland and Moonsund fortresses (in the towns of Abo and Arensburg) set up Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies in early March.

The Soviets of Workers' Deputies and the Soviets of Soldiers' or Army Deputies in the Ukraine, Moldavia, Byelorussia, the Baltic Area, the Transcaucasian Area and Central Asia were formed in the same period as those in the Central gubernias. In early March, workers' and soldiers' Soviets appeared in Kiev, Kharkov, Yekaterinoslav, Lugansk, Odessa, Kherson, Nikolayev and other Ukrainian towns. The townships of the miners in the Donets Basin were particularly active in forming Soviets of Deputies. According to the historian V. Y. Borshchevsky, more than 150 Soviets of Workers' and

<sup>1</sup> The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), p. 125 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> The Baltic Sailors in Preparing for and Carrying Through the Great October Socialist Revolution, Collection of Documents and Materials, Moscow-Leningrad, 1957, p. 331; and The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Working People, Collection of Documents, Moscow, 1957, p. 257 (Russ. eds.).

Soldiers' Deputies had come into existence in the Donets-Krivoi Rog mining area by the middle of March. Later they grew in number at a rapid rate as Soviets were formed at almost every big pit.<sup>1</sup>

In the Ukraine, as in Central Russia, the Volga Area, and Siberia, big cities were the first to set up Soviets. The Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies formed a Provincial Commission on March 15 which sent its 170 representatives to nearby towns and villages in the course of the next three months.

The propaganda commission of the Kharkov Soviet, led by Bolshevik V. I. Mezhlauk, did much work in the localities, and, as one member of the commission, N. K. Bushev, recalls, it provided "a link between the Kharkov R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Committee, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and local organisations".

The formation of the Soviets in Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa and other cities was enthusiastically welcomed in Moldavia, and a Soviet of Workers' Deputies was formed in Kishinev on March 12.<sup>2</sup> The local garrison elected its own Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. The executive bodies of both Soviets were combined two months later to create a basis for the Kishinev Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. During March 1917, Bender, Akkerman, Dubossary, Ungeny and other towns and settlements also elected Soviets of Deputies.

Soviets were formed in Byelorussia with the active participation of the Bolshevik organisations of Minsk and the Western Front. On the night of March 1-2 the Bolsheviks met in Minsk for an emergency meeting with M. V. Frunze, V. G. Knorin, K. I. Lander and other Bolshevik leaders present. It was decided to start organising a Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies immediately and to mobilise forces to render assistance to revolutionary Petrograd if required.<sup>3</sup> A joint meeting of the Minsk Bolsheviks and the Bolsheviks of the 3rd and 10th Armies of the Western Front was called on the next day. M. V. Frunze spoke on "The Present Situation and the Tasks of the Proletariat". Factories and units of the garrison then began to elect deputies to the Minsk Soviet.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. Y. Borshchevsky, *The Working Class and the Soviets of the Donets-Krivoi Rog Mining Area in the October Revolution*, Part 1, Dnepropetrovsk, 1962, p. 20 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> The Struggle for Soviet Power in Moldavia, March 1917-March 1918, Collection of Documents, Kishinev, 1957, pp. 11-12 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. G. Knorin, 1917 in Byelorussia, Minsk, 1925, pp. 9-10 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Chronicle of the Most Important Events in the History of the Communist Party of Byelorussia, Part I, Minsk, 1962, p. 222 (Russ. ed.).

On the night of March 4, at the inaugural meeting of the Minsk Soviet, the deputies and representatives of the city's workers elected a provisional executive committee with the internationalist-Mezh-rayonets<sup>1</sup> B. P. Pozern as Chairman and the Bolshevik I. Y. Lyubimov as Deputy Chairman. The Soviet decided to publish its own newspaper, *Izvestia of the Minsk Soviet*. The troops of the Minsk garrison elected their representatives to the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. A joint meeting of workers' and soldiers' deputies on March 6 adopted a Bolshevik proposal to merge the workers' and the soldiers' Soviets. The joint Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies held its first meeting on March 8.<sup>2</sup>

In early March Soviets of Workers' Deputies and Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies were formed in Gomel, Vitebsk, Polotsk, Mogilev, Borisov, Orsha, Bobruisk, Molodechno and other towns of Byelorussia.

The working people of the Baltic Area also began to set up Soviets immediately after the February Revolution. On March 2 the workers, soldiers and sailors of Revel broke open the prison and raided the police station, the court buildings and the offices of the Governor of Estland. They proceeded to elect deputies on the same day and appointed a popular militia committee. The Executive Committee of the Revel Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies was 45 strong.<sup>3</sup> A Soviet of Soldiers', Workers' and Students' Deputies was formed in Tartu and a Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies in Haapsalu, the latter establishing contact with the Revel and Petrograd Soviets.

Riga workers elected a City Soviet of Workers' Deputies of 39 members on March 7. Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies were set up in Riga, Fellin and Valka. Under the leadership of Latvian Bolsheviks Soviets of Workers' Deputies were also formed in Valmier, Jelga-

<sup>1</sup> Mezhrayonets ("inter-districter"), member of a factional organisation of the Social-Democrats which emerged in 1918. During World War I they took a centrist position, admitting that the war was an imperialist one, but not agreeing to break away from the Menshevik-defencists. However, the inter-district organisation (about 4,000 strong) broke with the Mensheviks later and was admitted to the Bolshevik Party at the 6th Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) held in July-August 1917. Subsequent events showed that some of these (Lunacharsky, Manuilsky, Volodarsky, Uritsky and others) had indeed finished with their centrist past and they became prominent workers of the Bolshevik Party. But Trotsky, although he joined the Bolshevik Party, did not become a Bolshevik and struggled covertly and overtly against Leninism and Party policy.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, March 10, 1917 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Estonia*, pp. 27-28, 53-54, 67 (Russ. ed.).

va, Cesis and other towns. They all included representatives of agricultural workers and peasants who possessed little or no land.<sup>4</sup>

The working people of the Transcaucasia and Central Asia took an active part in the February Revolution too. The first manifestation of this was the formation of Soviets.

The workers of Tiflis met on March 3 and decided to set up a Soviet. The Tiflis Soviet of Workers' Deputies elected an executive committee of 15. A Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies came into being at the same time.<sup>5</sup> In the early part of March Soviets were also set up in Erivan, Alexandropol, Kars, Sarykamysh, Trebizond and Nor Bayazet.<sup>6</sup>

A Soviet of Workers' Deputies was formed in Baku on March 6. S. G. Shahumyan, a tried and tested Bolshevik, was elected Chairman of its executive committee. Together with P. Japaridze, M. Azizbekov, A. I. Mikoyan and I. Fioletov, he fought against the Mensheviks and the representatives of the other petty-bourgeois parties in order to increase the influence of the Bolsheviks in the Baku Soviet.<sup>4</sup>

The railway workers of Tashkent were the first to start organising a Soviet in Central Asia. On March 3 the Tashkent City Soviet of Workers' Deputies was formed, and at the end of March it merged with the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. There was a small but influential group of Bolsheviks in the Tashkent Soviet in April 1917 which included A. Y. Pershin, N. V. Shumilov and A. A. Kazakov.

Following Tashkent, Soviets were set up in Krasnovodsk, Ashkhabad, Merv, Andizhan, Samarkand, Verny (Alma-Ata), Pishpek (Frunze), Kushka, Chardjou, Osh and other places. Some Soviets of Moslem Deputies also arose. According to figures quoted by D. M. Rudnitskaya,<sup>5</sup> in March-April 1917 there were 64 Soviets of workers', soldiers' and other deputies in Turkestan.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Drizulis, *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Latvia, A Short Historical Outline*, Riga, 1957, pp. 24, 27 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Struggle for the Victory of Soviet Power in Georgia, Documents and Materials*, Tbilisi, 1958, pp. 3, 5, 8, 13, 14 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution and the Victory of Soviet Power in Armenia, Collection of Documents*, Yerevan, 1957, pp. 613, 635; S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 151 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Bolsheviks in the Struggle for the Victory of the Socialist Revolution in Azerbaijan, Documents and Materials*, Baku, 1957, pp. 4-7 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> D. M. Rudnitskaya, *From the History of the Soviets in Turkestan*, Tashkent, 1964, p. 7; and *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1957, pp. 114, 126, 148, 168, 180, 199 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>6</sup> *Turkestan*—the historical and geographical name of a vast area in Central Asia. The former Turkestan of the Russian Empire now comprises the Uzbek S.S.R., Turkmen S.S.R., Tajik S.S.R., Kirghiz S.S.R. and the South of the Kazakh S.S.R.

The fact that Soviets of workers', soldiers', sailors', Cossacks' and other deputies were formed almost everywhere during March and April testified to the popular character of the February Revolution. The experience that workers and soldiers had gained in 1905 and which was reinforced during the overthrow of the tsar confirmed that the Soviets were the best form of mass political organisation of the revolutionary classes. "Guided by their class instinct, the workers have realised that in revolutionary times they need *not only* ordinary, but an entirely different organisation. They have rightly taken the path indicated by the experience of our 1905 Revolution and of the 1871 Paris Commune."<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. THE SOCIAL AND PARTY COMPOSITION OF THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES. THE INITIAL STAGE IN THE BUILDING OF THE SOVIETS

The changes in the country that resulted from the February Revolution had a tremendous impact on the political attitudes of people of all classes and walks of life. Groups of the liberal bourgeoisie, officers and officials "attached" themselves to the movement of the workers, soldiers and peasants. But all these groups pursued the single aim of retaining commanding positions in the economic, political and ideological life of the country. The bourgeoisie was assisted in this by the Mensheviks, the S.R.s, the Popular Socialists, and other petty-bourgeois parties. We have described above how these conciliators "diluted" the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. A similar pattern was to be observed all over the country.

Commenting on the situation in Moscow in the first few days after the February Revolution the prominent Bolshevik Party worker P. G. Smidovich said that the Soviet that had been formed there was a large and, from the point of view of its class content, a diffused body. Everyone had received mandates and only later did the Soviet succeed in clearing out the shopkeepers and other non-proletarian elements.<sup>2</sup> And M. I. Vasilyev-Yuzhin reported on the Saratov Soviet as follows: "The election of deputies from among office and shop employees, teachers and pupils, and from the small workshops, bakeries and so on, lowered the qualitative composition of the body of deputies to the Soviet, compared to what it had been in early

March. At that time there were almost only workers and revolutionaries of long standing taking part in the work. And the soldiers were represented by only the most revolutionary boys. That's why the Bolsheviks originally led the Soviet. Three of the Presidium's five members were old Bolsheviks (M. I. Vasilyev-Yuzhin, V. P. Millyutin and P. A. Lebedev). But when I returned from Petrograd in the middle of April 1917 I found the Soviet seething with Mensheviks and S.R.s."<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes local money-bags got hold of the Soviets through the men in them who represented factory and plant owners. The Soviet in Orekhovo-Zuyevo consisted mainly of office clerks and factory managerial staff, etc., when it was first convened.<sup>4</sup> In the town of Kolchugino (Vladimir Gubernia) the local authorities set up a so-called "public committee" in early March and then declared it a Soviet of Workers' Deputies.<sup>5</sup> The Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev, Saratov and other Soviet's departments in charge of provincial affairs received information that Zemstvo officials, bourgeois co-operators and other alien elements were trying to penetrate the Soviets.

The heterogeneous social composition of the Soviets of the capital and other places was largely explained by the artificial and non-proportional quota system of representation established by the S.R. and Menshevik provisional executive committees and sponsoring committees in the early days of the Revolution.

In Nizhni-Novgorod semi-handicraft workshops with 50 or 100 men in them elected one deputy each to the City Soviet while big factories had only one deputy per thousand workers.<sup>6</sup> Fourteen small enterprises in Yekaterinodar with a total number of 350 workers had 25 deputies while the 700 workers of the Kuban Metal Works had 7 deputies.<sup>5</sup> And A. Z. Kamensky, representing the Lugansk Party organisation, said at the Sixth R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Congress that in the Lugansk Soviets there was representation for 200 teachers and 10 shopkeepers, etc., while the workers were only allowed to send to the Soviet one deputy per 500.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Saratov Soviet of Workers' Deputies, 1917-1918*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1931, p. 782 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Surrounding Areas of Moscow in 1917*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, p. 20 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Nizhni-Novgorod Soviet of Workers' Deputies, March 3, 1917 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> V. Y. Aviltsev, *The Bolsheviks of the Kuban and the Black Sea Maritime Area in the Period of the Imperialist War and the Second Revolution in Russia, 1914-1917*, p. 212, (Russ. ed.).

<sup>6</sup> *The Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Minutes*, p. 52 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, p. 88 (Russ. ed.).

There are no statistics available for 1917 which would make it possible to give a full analysis of the composition of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in every individual administrative district and throughout the country as a whole. But Table 1 gives an idea of the situation. (See p. 52.)

TABLE 1  
The Party Composition of the City Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies at Their First Convocation (March-May 1917)\*

| Soviets  | Total number of deputies | Bolsheviks | Mensheviks | S.R.s | Other parties | Non-party | Per cent Bolsheviks |
|--|--------------------------|------------|------------|-------|---------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .                  | 2,800                    | 65         | —          | —     | —             | —         | 2.4                 |
| Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies . . . . .                                   | 625                      | 143        | 126        | 67    | —             | —         | 22.8                |
| Saratov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Workers' Section) . . . . . | 248                      | 28         | 16         | 6     | 5             | 193       | 11.3                |
| Samara Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Workers' Section) . . . . .  | 85                       | 22         | 20         | 8     | 18            | 17        | 25.9                |
| Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies . . . . .                                     | 444                      | 62         | 131        | 55    | 91            | 105       | 14.0                |
| Kharkov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .                    | 320                      | 41         | 52         | 34    | 8             | 185       | 12.8                |
| Yekaterinburg Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .              | 350                      | 140        | —          | —     | —             | —         | 40.0                |
| Kronstadt Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies . . . . .                       | 298                      | 93         | 46         | 91    | —             | 68        | 31.2                |

\* This table has been compiled from the following sources: S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66; A. I. Razgon, *The Soviets of the Lower Volga Area in the Period of the Peaceful Advance of the Revolution (March-June 1917)*, Moscow, 1965, pp. 139, 156; I. Braginsky, "The Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies" in *Letopis Revolutsii* (Records of the Revolution) No. 3 (96), 1929, p. 29; V. I. Lobakhin, *The First Kharkov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (March-August 20, 1917)*, Moscow, 1946, p. 79; P. Sivkov, *The Sailors of the Baltic Fleet in the Struggle for Soviet Power in 1917*, p. 72. (Russ. eds.).

It will be seen that it was only in certain big City Soviets (Yekaterinburg, Kronstadt, Moscow, Samara and others) that the Bolsheviks held from 23% to 40% of the seats. In the overwhelming majority of the Soviets the petty-bourgeois parties predominated. This was one result of the insufficient organisation of the working class, combined with the corrupting influence of the Mensheviks and

the S.R.s. "A gigantic petty-bourgeois wave has swept over everything and overwhelmed the class-conscious proletariat," Lenin said, "not only by force of numbers but also ideologically; that is, it has infected and imbued very wide circles of workers with the petty-bourgeois political outlook."<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviks began their struggle to change the composition of the Soviets during the very first days of the Revolution. This struggle developed and spread as the Party organisations improved their work. The Orekhovo-Zuyevo (a textile town near Moscow) members of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) met on March 6. On behalf of their newly elected Party committee the Bolshevik A. I. Lipatov addressed a request to the Zamoskvorechye District (Moscow) Party Committee to send comrades to "make clear the current situation and to convene fresh elections of deputies". In this connection the secretary of the Orekhovo-Zuyevo Soviet, the Cadet Lokhanko, wrote to the Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet: "The Moscow Bolsheviks (Lobanov and Yefimov) arrived on March 15 and 16. They have put forward at meetings the slogan of non-confidence in the members of the Provisional Government and begun anti-war agitation. They have also said that it is necessary to use the present moment to satisfy economic demands."<sup>2</sup>

The S.R. and Menshevik Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies urgently sent its instructor A. Lanne, a Right S.R., to Orekhovo-Zuyevo, but all his attempts to retain the former composition of the Soviet failed. After meetings called by the Moscow and local Bolsheviks the original Orekhovo-Zuyevo Soviet was forced to resign. Crowded meetings took place at factories and workshops on March 19 when new elections of deputies were held. The Soviet's Executive Bureau was formed shortly afterwards with A. I. Lipatov at its head, and the Orekhovo-Zuyevo Soviet thereafter remained under Bolshevik influence.

In the town of Pavlov-Posad (Moscow Gubernia) it happened that a commissar of the bourgeois Provisional Government headed the Soviet. But soon after the instructor of the Moscow Soviet Y. D. Zevin, a Bolshevik, had been to Pavlov-Posad this "oversight" was rectified.<sup>3</sup>

The Bolsheviks were particularly worried about the haphazard, largely petty-bourgeois composition of the Petrograd Soviet. At the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Studies in the History of the Region. Collection*, Orekhovo-Zuyevo Teachers' Training College and the Orekhovo-Zuyevo Museum of Regional Study, Issue 1, Moscow, 1959, p. 42 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

organisational meeting of the Petrograd Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) held on March 2 the Party's attitude towards the Soviets came under discussion and it was mentioned that because of the Petrograd Soviet's loose composition its meetings were held without system, confining itself only to hearing the draft decisions worked out by the Executive Committee with the Soviet itself "dragging in the wake of the Provisional Committee of the State Duma".<sup>1</sup> The Bolsheviks were faced with the difficult task of changing the social and party composition of the Petrograd Soviet. This could not have been done at that time by means of fresh elections to the whole of the Soviet because the Bolshevik organisations in the capital were only just starting to develop their work under legal conditions and the Menshevik and S.R. influence prevailed among the masses of the workers and soldiers. In view of this situation the Petersburg R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Committee decided to develop mass tactical work in the districts and the factories in order to explain to the workers the need to elect genuine representatives of the people to the Soviet.

The question of the formation of the executive committees and presidiums of the Soviets was a central issue as these executive organs were regarded by the Bolsheviks as the Soviets' working apparatus and they tried to make them function actively as such. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s on the other hand looked on the executive committees (as on the Soviets as a whole) only as "democratic representative bodies". They allowed the executive committees to swell without limit mainly by co-opting representatives of the petty-bourgeois parties onto them.

Table 2 gives an idea of the composition of the executive committees of the capital's Soviets and of those of some other Soviets in the localities in the first months of 1917. (See p. 55.)

The Petrograd Soviet's leaders, realising that the large size of its Executive Committee made it unable to deal with day-to-day affairs, set up special auxiliary bodies. This is how the Bureau of the Executive Committee, consisting of seven members and three candidate members, emerged. The Bolshevik faction was represented on it by P. I. Stuchka, M. K. Muranov and P. A. Krasikov.

Originally, the Bureau was supposed to deal with the preparation of questions for discussion at the Soviet's plenary meetings. But then it became obvious that the S.R. and Menshevik leaders had it in mind to enlarge the Bureau, concentrating the Soviet's leadership

<sup>1</sup> *The First Legal Petersburg Committee of the Bolsheviks in 1917*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, pp. 3-4 (Russ. ed.).

TABLE 2  
The Party Composition of the E.C.s of the City Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies at Their First Convocation (March-June 1917)\*

| Soviets  | Total number of members | Bolsheviks | Mensheviks | S.R.s | Other Parties | Non-party | Per cent Bolsheviks | Note                     |
|--|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------|---------------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .                  | 90                      | 15         | —          | —     | —             | —         | 16.5                |                          |
| Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies . . . . .                                   | 75                      | 23         | 21         | 24    | 6             | —         | 30.6                | 1 is not certain         |
| Saratov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Workers' Section) . . . . . | 14                      | 7          | 4          | 1     | —             | 2         | 50.0                |                          |
| Samara Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Workers' Section) . . . . .  | 15                      | 10         | 5          | —     | —             | —         | 75.0                |                          |
| Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies . . . . .                                     | 37                      | 6          | —          | —     | —             | —         | 16.2                |                          |
| Kharkov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .                    | 29                      | 2          | 16         | 8     | 1             | 2         | 7.0                 |                          |
| Yekaterinburg Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .              | 15                      | 9          | 1          | 5     | —             | —         | 60.0                | Pre-May election figures |

\* This table has been compiled from the following sources: L. F. Karamysheva, *The Bolsheviks' Struggle for the Petrograd Soviet*, Leningrad, 1964, p. 21; *Essays on the History of the October Revolution in Moscow*, p. 106; A. I. Razgon, op. cit., pp. 135, 136, 159; I. Braginsky, op. cit., p. 29; V. I. Lobakhin, op. cit., p. 79; *The Urals Pravda*, May 26, 1917 (Russ. eds.).

into it in order to isolate the Bolsheviks. Every one of any prominence in the petty-bourgeois parties—the Mensheviks, the S.R.s, the Popular Socialists, the Bundists,<sup>1</sup> etc.—was to be included in it. The Bolshevik faction was to receive only four seats in the Bureau. This drew sharp protests from the Bolshevik deputies and their sympathisers among the workers. The Bolsheviks pointed out that if they were to agree to this proposal of the Presidium the Bureau would become

<sup>1</sup> The *Bund*—the Universal Jewish Social-Democratic Union in Russia, a petty-bourgeois, opportunist, nationalistic party.

even more Rightist in composition than the Executive Committee itself.

The conciliators were thus compelled to throw off the mask of "fighters for democracy" and announce their intentions openly. Chkheidze declared that it was necessary to "set up a politically homogeneous executive Bureau comprised of people definitely supporting the positions of the Executive Committee".<sup>1</sup> Tsereteli added that "the parties of the majority of the Soviet [i.e., the Mensheviks and S.R.s.—A. A.] do not object to including Left-wing representatives in the Bureau", but "only those of them who agree with the general line of the Petrograd Soviet".

The Bolsheviks then refused to be included on the Bureau at all as the Soviet majority had violated the right of political parties to proportional representation. A. G. Shlyapnikov, on behalf of the Bolshevik faction, issued an official statement saying that it would be impossible for the Bolsheviks to take part in elections to the executive Bureau as its constitution violated the rights of the revolutionary minority. This stand of the Bolshevik faction of the Petrograd Soviet was approved by the districts.

N. S. Chkheidze was elected Chairman of the Bureau of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, and the Menshevik I. G. Tsereteli and the S.R. V. M. Chernov were elected deputy chairmen. The Executive Committee set up the following departments to deal with day-to-day matters: 1) The Petrograd Department (for local affairs), 2) The Extra-Metropolitan Department, 3) The International Department, 4) The Labour Department, 5) The Military Department, 6) The Legislature, 7) The Propaganda Department, 8) The Agricultural Department, 9) The Finance Department, 10) The Administrative Department (dealing with the affairs of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies), 11) The Press Department, in charge of *Izvestia* and *Soldatskaya Gazeta* (The Soldiers' Newspaper). Each department was led by a member of the Executive Committee and a board of workers.<sup>2</sup>

The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies had a slightly different structure. It had departments to deal with 1) the district Soviets, 2) provincial matters, 3) labour, 4) the front lines, 5) supplies, and 6) publishing. Somewhat later some other departments emerged (including an economic department and a commission on draft deferment).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, April 18, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Y. Ignatov, *The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, p. 73 (Russ. ed.).

The temporary and permanent commissions of the Soviets played an important part. They were set up everywhere on the Petrograd and Moscow models. The Krasnoyarsk Soviet, apart from its two main sections (the workers' section and the soldiers' section) had permanent commissions to deal with agitation and propaganda, with accounts and estimates of available supplies of goods, a law commission, and a committee to protect and control the railways. The agitation and propaganda commission organised meetings, lectures and reports at factories and in the local garrison. The accounts and estimates commission, which included the Bolsheviks A. G. Shlikhter, A. G. Rogov, I. A. Staroverov and B. Z. Zhumyatovsky, uncovered hidden food supplies and other necessities of life, watched over the provision of all essential goods to the population and took measures to prevent speculation. The commission on law guarded the working people's rights against landlords on questions of rent, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The sections and commissions of the Urals Soviets acted with great energy. The Lysva Soviet of Workers' Deputies had seven commissions, many of them led by Bolsheviks. The control commission looked into "the general state of production", in particular, the profits made by factory owners. The accommodation commission investigated the possibilities of improving the living conditions of workers, having been given the right of requisition by the E.C. of the Soviet to secure some extra living space from the bourgeoisie. The commission on draft deferment uncovered traders, kulaks and officials who were evading the draft on the pretext that they were doing "defence work".<sup>2</sup>

The permanent and temporary commissions set up by the Soviets were a living manifestation of the democratic nature of these revolutionary organs of power. It was by participating in the work of the sections and commissions of the Soviets that many hundreds and thousands of working people received their first political schooling. Lenin said that the Soviets "taught the workers, soldiers and peasants that they could and should take all state power into their own hands".<sup>3</sup>

During the first months of the Revolution permanent associations of district Soviets were established in Petrograd, and temporary associations in Moscow. The Bolsheviks devoted much attention to these associations and made effective use of them in their fight against the

<sup>1</sup> *The Krasnoyarsk Soviet (March 1917-June 1918)*, p. 43 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *From the History of the Urals Working Class*, Collection of Articles, Perm, 1961, pp. 288-89 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 490.

S.R. and Menshevik majority in the Petrograd and Moscow City Soviets.

On April 23 representatives of all the Petrograd districts met in the Taurida Palace. It was decided to set up a special body to establish contacts and exchange information between the district Soviets. This body was named the Interdistrict Conference of the Petrograd Soviets and was destined to play an important part in the Bolshevik conquest of the Soviets. A different form of liaison between the districts was found in Moscow where joint meetings of the executive committees of the district Soviets were held.

On May 4 the Interdistrict Conference discussed the reorganisation of the Petrograd Soviets. The main thing that concerned the workers' deputies was the nature of the relations between the Petrograd City Soviet and the city's district Soviets. In the course of the discussion two diametrically opposed points of view were expressed and, accordingly, two different resolutions were put forward. The Mensheviks insisted that the deputies elected to the Petrograd Soviet by the districts should have the right to cast deciding votes in their district Soviets. The Bolsheviks and their sympathisers among the workers struggled against the encroachments of the Menshevik-S.R. majority of the Petrograd Soviet on the rights of the district Soviets, but the conciliators' resolution was nevertheless carried.

On the same day a joint meeting of the E.C.s of the Moscow District Soviets was held. The question of co-ordinating the work of the Moscow City and district Soviets also came under discussion. Representatives of the Moscow Soviet (the Mensheviks Romanov and Yudov, and Yegorov from the *Unity* group) tried to justify the actions of the conciliators and called on the deputies "to understand the need to establish close contacts between, and to co-ordinate completely the actions of the district Soviets with those of the City Soviet of Workers' Deputies".<sup>1</sup>

The Mensheviks' line and their tendency to assign to the district Soviets of Moscow the role of middlemen between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was unanimously condemned by the Bolsheviks and their supporters. While the meeting of the E.C.s of the Moscow District Soviets came out in favour of co-ordinating the actions of the districts with those of the City Soviet, it proposed to the E.C. of the Moscow Soviet that it take the following steps without delay:

1) to allow one representative from each district into the City Soviet;

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the E.C.s of the Moscow District Soviets on May 4, 1917, S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66 (Russ. ed.).

2) to make it the duty of the E.C. members of the City Soviet to give regular public report-backs in the districts they represented;

3) to co-opt onto the Executive Committee of the City Soviet delegates from those districts which had no representatives.<sup>1</sup>

These decisions from below of the "rank-and-file" Soviets were of great importance in principle because they highlighted the workers' striving to counteract the plans of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s to turn the Soviets into meek and powerless bodies which merely fulfilled directives from "above". And the revolutionary masses worked to secure the extension of democracy in all the activities of the Soviets.

The building of the Soviets in 1917 involved, in the initial stages, the uniting of the mass political organisations of the workers, soldiers and peasants. United Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies had first appeared in 1905. But they existed then only in certain towns (Krasnoyarsk, Sevastopol) and only for a short time. Whereas after the February Revolution a mass movement developed among the revolutionary classes in favour of uniting the Soviets. Once begun in Petrograd, this movement quickly spread throughout the country.

Lenin considered the organisation of all working people in Soviets to be a matter of great importance. In his "Draft Theses" dated March 4 (17), 1917, he emphasised the possibility of extending the organisations of the proletariat (i.e., the Soviets) to cover the Army and the countryside.<sup>2</sup> And in his *Letters from Afar* Lenin again called the attention of Bolsheviks to the fact that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies had begun to attract representatives of the soldiers and peasants.<sup>3</sup>

In March and April 1917 the Astrakhan, Voronezh, Yekaterinburg, Kazan, Samara, Saratov, Taganrog, Tsaritsyn, Kronstadt, Irkutsk, Yaroslavl and other city Soviets adopted decisions to unite with the soldiers and peasants. These decisions were motivated by the need to rally and combine all the forces of the revolution. The resolution of the Samara Soviet of Workers' Deputies observed that the workers, soldiers and peasants should be united in one and the same organisation, since "only united action can bring certain success".<sup>4</sup> And the cable from the first plenum of the Irkutsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies greeting the Petrograd Soviet

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 290.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Samara Soviet of Workers' Deputies, April 26, 1917.

declared: "The fraternal unity of the revolutionary army and the people is a pledge of the successful completion of the revolution and the establishing of full people's power."<sup>1</sup>

We do not possess exhaustive data on the number of united Soviets, but according to Academician I. I. Mints 90 cities had united Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in March 1917.<sup>2</sup>

The Soviets of Workers' Deputies joined up with the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies not only in the main gubernia cities and other big centres in the country but also in the uyezds and small towns. Y. M. Gamretsky has discovered interesting statistics relating to Poltava Gubernia. Seven uyezd Soviets of Poltava Gubernia were represented at the first Kiev Regional<sup>3</sup> Congress of Soviets (April 23-27). Only one of them, the Romny Soviet, was united. But three months later only two uyezd towns (Kremenchug and Priluki) had non-united Soviets. And by the time the Fourth Congress of Soviets of the Poltava Gubernia was convened (October 13, 1917), all 15 uyezd towns had united Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and two of them (Mirgorod and Lubny) had united Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.<sup>4</sup>

Alongside the united Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the cities and townships, associations of Soviets were set up on a territorial basis within gubernias, areas, regions, districts and sub-districts.

In Moscow Gubernia the Bogorodskoye, Guchkovo, Dmitrov, Kuntsevo, Shchelkovo and other district Soviets were set up in March. The Bakhmut Conference of Delegates of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was held in the Donets-Krivoi Rog mining area from March 15 to 17, at which 48 Soviets uniting 187,000 men and women were represented. The Conference adopted a decision to set up six district Soviets "to promote more planned and fruitful activity". At the same time the uyezd Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies were also set up.

The creative initiative of the workers and soldiers in organising the Soviets was supported in every way by the Bolsheviks, and the Soviet form was now becoming the broad mass form of the political organisation of the working people.

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 1000.

<sup>2</sup> I. I. Mints, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 778 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> The Kiev region included several gubernias at that time.

<sup>4</sup> Y. M. Gamretsky, "The Unification of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies in the Ukraine in 1917" in *October and the Civil War in the USSR*, Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1966, p. 151 (Russ. ed.).

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SOVIETS' ACTIVITIES IN THE ORGANISATION OF THE INTERNAL LIFE OF THE COUNTRY AFTER THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION



## 1. THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PETROGRAD SOVIET AND THE STATE DUMA. THE FORMATION OF THE BOURGEOIS PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

In the February Revolution the central issue was the question of state power. The workers and revolutionary soldiers who overthrew the tsar were in no doubt that the Soviets were the only organs capable of forming the Provisional Revolutionary Government. The resolutions passed by the factory workers in the first days of the Revolution prove this. A general meeting of the Shchetinin Factory in Petrograd on March 1 elected the Bolshevik V. F. Grachev to "the Provisional Revolutionary Government—the Soviet of Workers' Deputies". On the same day the factory committee of the Shliselburg Gun Powder Factory authorised their deputy Turkin to go to the Taurida Palace to receive instructions from the Soviet in its capacity as the Provisional Revolutionary Government.<sup>1</sup>

These and other facts indicate the enthusiastic response of the Petrograd proletariat to the ideas put forward in the 27th February Manifesto of the Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and the calls of the Petersburg City and Vyborg District Committees of the Bolshevik Party to form a revolutionary-democratic government. But the members of the Fourth State Duma and the leaders of the petty-bourgeois Menshevik and S.R. parties had quite different ideas about how to organise "the new order" in Russia.

On the night of February 26-27 the Chairman of the State Duma M. V. Rodzyanko received the decree of Nicholas II dissolving the Duma. The majority of the Duma were cowardly pro-royalists subservient to the will of the tsar and they calmly accepted this news. The Monarchist Rodzyanko wrote later: "The Duma obeyed the law, still hoping to find a way out of the confused situation, and made no

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<sup>1</sup> *Historical Notes*, Vol. 73, p. 117 (Russ. ed.).

decision at its sitting not to dissolve the Duma and to convene it by force."<sup>1</sup>

Such a confession from one of the pillars of the counter-revolution is the best proof of how the Russian bourgeoisie behaved during the February Revolution. However, though incapable of doing away with tsarism single-handed, the bourgeoisie turned out to be organised enough to exploit the victory won by the working people. While there was still fighting in the streets of Petrograd and the factory workers and the garrison soldiers were electing their deputies to the Petrograd Soviet, members of the dissolved Duma gathered in the Taurida Palace for "a private meeting", where they set up (on February 27) the so-called Provisional Committee of the State Duma, led by M. V. Rodzyanko. It included prominent members of the bourgeois parties: P. N. Milyukov (a Cadet), N. V. Nekrasov (a Cadet), I. I. Dmitryukov (an Octobrist), S. I. Shidlovsky (an Octobrist), A. I. Konovalov (a Progressist), V. A. Rzhevsky (a Progressist), V. N. Lvov and V. V. Shulgin (both Nationalists). The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet delegated A. F. Kerensky and N. S. Chkheidze to this Provisional Committee.<sup>2</sup>

On the next day (February 28) the Provisional Committee of the State Duma announced to the capital's population that "it had found itself compelled to take into its hands the restoration of state and public order".<sup>3</sup> There was no mention of what kind of order the bourgeoisie had in mind but this was soon to become clear. Although the organs set up by the Petrograd Soviet had begun to function, the supporters of the Duma formed their own bodies, appointed Commissars, and so on. An Army Commission, a Food Supplies Commission and other State Duma Commissions appeared.

The Army Commission, led by General Staff Colonel B. A. Engelgardt, was particularly active at the beginning of the Revolution. On behalf of the Duma Committee Engelgardt issued orders and directives demanding that the revolutionary regiments return to their barracks and the counter-revolutionary officers' rights be restored. Rodzyanko acted in the same way. He persistently appealed to the soldiers and sailors to maintain complete discipline, calm and order, and "to go on with the fight against the external enemy".

The Army Commission of the State Duma, anti-popular in its

<sup>1</sup> M. V. Rodzyanko, *The State Duma and the February Revolution*, Archives of the Russian Revolution, Vol. VI, Berlin, 1922, p. 57 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' Deputies, February 28, 1917 (Supplement).

<sup>3</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia after the Overthrow of Tsarism*, p. 404 (Russ. ed.).

composition, made determined efforts to stamp out "disturbances", i.e., to crush the Revolution. Its leaders actively assisted the advance towards Petrograd of the punitive expedition of General Ivanov which Nicholas II had dispatched from General Headquarters. And when the revolutionary workers and soldiers frustrated this adventure, the members of the Duma appointed the Monarchist and "brave General" L. G. Kornilov Commander-in-Chief of the Petrograd Military District. The mustering of counter-revolutionary forces was only one of the tasks which the Provisional Committee of the State Duma set itself. Its main concern was to preserve the monarchy. Rodzyanko sent the tsar one cable after another imploring him to make concessions and to agree to the formation of a "responsible cabinet of ministers". When this had no effect the Duma sent A. I. Guchkov and V. V. Shulgin to Pskov and authorised them to obtain the abdication of Nicholas II in favour of his young son.

All the backstage fuss around the "crown-bearer" took place behind the backs of the revolutionary people and in opposition to their will. The Provisional Committee of the State Duma possessed no forces at that time to realise its plans and held only nominal power. The Petrograd workers and revolutionary soldiers recognised only the Petrograd Soviet and carried out only its decisions and orders. The Soviet received hundreds of telegrams daily expressing confidence in and solidarity with it from various towns and gubernias and from the front lines.

Reactionary American historiography has of late been making attempts to "resurrect" the Provisional Committee of the State Duma, ascribing to it a "prominent" part in the Second Russian Revolution, and to push the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies into the background. Kerensky has been particularly active in this falsification of history.

It is therefore appropriate to mention here the fact that on the eve of the October Revolution and in the first years of Soviet power prominent men in the parties of the Cadets and the Octobrists, P. N. Milyukov and A. I. Guchkov, assessed the Provisional Committee of the State Duma and the Soviets of Deputies in a different way to the ex-Prime Minister of the Provisional Government. In his book *Russia at a Turning Point*, P. N. Milyukov wrote: "The legend that the State Duma as an institution took the lead in the revolution by no means conforms to reality."<sup>1</sup> And the Deputy Chairman of the

<sup>1</sup> P. N. Milyukov, *Russia at a Turning Point*, Vol. I, Paris, 1927, p. 46 (Russ. ed.).

Army Commission of the State Duma Provisional Committee, and later Minister for the Armed Forces in the Provisional Government, A. I. Guchkov, said: "This . . . 'revolutionary democracy' which had set up numerous organisations [i.e., the Soviets of Deputies—A. A.] first in Petrograd and later all over Russia became now the actual master of the situation, having at its disposal a considerable part of the armed forces and the workers; and it was this so-called revolutionary democracy that was the bearer of state power."<sup>1</sup> (So that even the leaders of the bourgeois parties had to admit this.)

Consequently the balance of forces during the February Revolution was such that it would have been possible for the Petrograd Soviet to have abolished the Provisional Committee of the State Duma painlessly, declared itself the Revolutionary Government and concentrated all power in its own hands. But this did not happen because the petty-bourgeois parties constituting the majority in the Soviet were not capable of independent revolutionary action.

The second meeting of the Petrograd Soviet (February 28) heard the report of the Provisional Executive Committee on the organisational measures it had taken. The speaker, Y. M. Steklov, a Menshevik, expressing the opinion of the S.R. and Menshevik majority, declared: "It is necessary to rely not only on the workers but also on other groups. We won't be able to hold out without the representatives of other strata of the population." The view of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties that it was desirable to have "agreed action" by the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Committee of the State Duma was shared by the most far-sighted of the liberal bourgeoisie. In moving to form the Provisional Government the bourgeois parties of the Cadets, Octobrists and Progressists realised that no government would be able to hold out long and to consolidate its position without the support during the revolution of the Petrograd Soviet and the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies throughout the country.

There was only one way out—to "tame" the petty-bourgeois socialists by allowing the most "dependable" of them to be included in the future government. P. N. Milyukov said later: "By allowing them [the Mensheviks and the S.R.s—A. A.] to share power it was supposed that we should all work for one common cause, each of us refraining from pursuing his particular party aims."<sup>2</sup> It was with this prospect in view that the Duma members offered the representatives

<sup>1</sup> *The State Assembly Stenographic Records*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1930, p. 102 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> C.S.A.O.R., U.S.S.R., File 579.

of "democracy" A. F. Kerensky and N. S. Chkheidze posts in the Provisional Government.

The question of the formation of a government came under discussion in the Petrograd Soviet on March 1. Most of the deputies who supported the Mensheviks and S.R.s were inclined to the view that the State Duma Provisional Committee should not be prevented from forming the Provisional Government and the Soviet should confine itself only to presenting certain demands to the Government and to checking how they were carried out. But afraid to antagonise the revolutionary masses the S.R. and Menshevik leaders declined the offer of the State Duma Committee for E.C. members of the Petrograd Soviet to join the Provisional Government.<sup>1</sup>

As subsequent events showed, the "opposition" of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties to the State Duma Provisional Committee was merely a sham demonstration made in the hope of deceiving the workers and soldiers. Many years later, when trying to justify the betrayal of the interests of the revolution by the petty-bourgeois socialists, the ideologist of Menshevism I. G. Tsereteli wrote: "The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies were not regarded as organs of power in competition with the Government [the bourgeois one.—A. A.] for the seizure of power, but as centres set up to ensure the influence of these classes on the course of the revolution."<sup>2</sup>

In fact, this "influence" manifested itself in Chkheidze, Steklov, Sukhanov and Filippovsky, all members of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet, conducting behind-the-scenes talks with the Duma Committee on the formation of the Provisional Government. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s were prepared to make any deal in order to form an alliance with the Cadets and the other bourgeois parties.

The compliant ways of the Petrograd Soviet's leaders encouraged the members of the Provisional Committee and they firmly resisted entering into an agreement on points which did not suit the bourgeoisie. This resulted in "leaving open" the question of the political form of the state system in Russia and excluding the demand of the revolutionary soldiers for their commanding officers to be subject to election. The leader of the Cadets P. N. Milyukov obtained consent that the declaration on the formation of the Provisional Government should state that it had been formed "in agreement with the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kerensky joined the first Provisional Government on his own initiative despite this decision of the Petrograd Soviet.

<sup>2</sup> I. G. Tsereteli, *Memoirs of the February Revolution*, Book 1, Paris, 1963, p. 23 (Russ. ed.). (Underlined by me.—A.A.)

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, March 3, 1917.

The meeting of members of the Duma and of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet worked out a programme of activity for the future Provisional Government. The programme was framed in such a way that the most urgent demands of the working people—for stopping the war and signing a just and democratic peace, for solving the land question, and for introducing the 8-hour working day—were left out. It retained only items covering the amnesty of political and religious prisoners, freedom of speech and assembly, cancellation of all legal privileges and restrictions of a social, national or religious nature, and provisions guaranteeing that the revolutionary regiments would be neither withdrawn from Petrograd nor disarmed.

The agreement between the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the Petrograd Soviet and the State Duma Provisional Committee on the formation of the Cadet-Octobrist Government did not, of course, mean that the revolutionary masses had agreed to cede power to the bourgeoisie without a murmur and of their own free will. The reception given to P. N. Milyukov who first announced the "glad tidings" to the workers and soldiers present in the Taurida Palace that the talks on the formation of the Provisional Government had come to "a happy end", is sufficient indication of this. Milyukov's speech was met by an audience very much on the alert and he was interrupted often and angrily. "Who has elected you?" cried the crowd. Milyukov tried to assure his listeners that the future Prime Minister, Count Lvov, had the same opinions as the organised Russian public. But he was corrected: "An exclusive, propertied public, you mean!" And presenting himself as a well-known "fighter for freedom" Milyukov complained that he would have to be in constant collaboration with his political enemy, A. I. Guchkov. "You mean with your friend!" came the reply.<sup>1</sup>

S. D. Mstislavsky, an active worker of the soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet and head of its Military Commission, remembers that the suggestion that Count Lvov be made head of the "revolutionary" Government particularly disturbed the representatives of the soldiers—"What's the idea, to replace the Tsar by a Count, and that's it? Was it worth while fixing our bayonets for that!?"<sup>2</sup>

On March 2 the outcome of the talks between the E.C. delegation and the Duma Committee members was discussed at a plenum of the Petrograd Soviet. This meeting lasted about seven hours. The main speaker, Y. M. Steklov, proposed approving the Soviet's Declaration

and making an appeal to the population to display tolerance and to back the Provisional Government as "it moves towards the realisation of the planned tasks". In the course of the debate on the formation of a government the Bolsheviks, on whose behalf K. I. Shutko (Demyanov) spoke, demanded the formation of a "Provisional Government from the members of the Soviet".<sup>1</sup> The Mensheviks and the S.R.s accused the Bolsheviks of making "dangerous claims" which might cause the revolution to "collapse".<sup>2</sup> The Declaration was adopted with one amendment stating that all the measures that had been planned must be carried through by the Provisional Government in spite of the state of war, and announcing the setting up by the E.C. of a special "watch committee" to keep a check on the activities of the Provisional Government.

Steklov's report was followed by a long and demagogical speech from Kerensky. He succeeded in getting the Soviet's approval of his illegally joining the Provisional Government as Minister of Law by winning over the main bulk of the deputies, who at that time had little experience of politics. Only 19 out of the 400 deputies present voted for the Bolsheviks' proposal to form the Provisional Government from the representatives of the political parties in the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>3</sup>

Why did the Petrograd Soviet, the organ of revolutionary power, give away its positions to the bourgeoisie by making a series of concessions to it? People who were not experienced in politics believed that the "mistakes" made by the leaders of the Petrograd Soviet—Chkhheidze, Tsereteli, Steklov and others—could be "corrected" in a comparatively easy way. Lenin replied: "Nonsense. Only a philistine can think so—not a Marxist. The reason is *insufficient class-consciousness* and organisation of the proletarians and peasants. The 'mistake' of the leaders I have named lies in their petty-bourgeois position, in the fact that instead of clarifying the minds of the workers, they are *befogging* them; instead of dispelling petty-bourgeois illusions, they are *instilling* them; instead of freeing the people from bourgeois influence, they are *strengthening* that influence."<sup>4</sup>

The Declaration of the formation of the Provisional Government which appeared in the Petrograd Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* on March 3 mentioned that the Government of Count Lvov and the

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 1000.

<sup>2</sup> *The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1917, Part 1, Moscow-Leningrad, 1931, p. 70 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The First Legal Petersburg Committee of Bolsheviks in 1917*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, p. 10 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 39-40.

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia After the Overthrow of Tsarism*, pp. 411-14 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S. Mstislavsky, *Five Days*, Berlin-Petrograd-Moscow, 1922, p. 57 (Russ. ed.).

bourgeois Guchkov, Konovalov, Tereshchenko and others had been formed "with the agreement of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet". This puzzled the workers and soldiers and led to unrest in some places.

The Bolsheviks of the Vyborg District held an open meeting there for the first time on the night of March 2. Besides Party members about 2,000 non-Party workers attended. The Bolsheviks explained to the assembled audience the nature of the situation and exhorted them to struggle for the granting of full power to the Soviets. The meeting unanimously passed a resolution demanding that: "1. All power prior to the convocation of the Constituent Assembly go to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, as the only Revolutionary Government; 2) the Army and the civilian population carry out only the decisions of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and regard as invalid the directives of the Executive Committee of the members of the State Duma; 3) all the officials and officers who served the old regime and all persons and organisations who are out of sympathy with the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies be neutralised by removing them from positions of power in the city and the country; and 4) the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies must itself arrange the convocation of a Constituent Assembly to settle the questions of the organisation of a new state system and the ending of the war."<sup>1</sup>

On the next day the Bolsheviks duplicated this resolution and pasted it on the walls of the factories and plants and in the streets of the Vyborg District of Petrograd. The demand of the workers of the Vyborg District for the transfer of all power to the Soviets was backed by the workers of the Putilov Plant and other Petrograd factories.

On March 3 a meeting of workers and soldiers was held on the premises of the Sampson Fraternity (in the Vyborg District) to which 1,000 people went. After discussing the recognition of the bourgeois Government by the Petrograd Soviet the meeting decided "to give no power to the Provisional Government over the country in the insurrection, even for a time. The Soviet of Workers' Deputies must immediately remove this Provisional Government and declare itself the Provisional Revolutionary Government".<sup>2</sup>

This is how the second wave of the revolutionary movement of the Petrograd proletariat for Soviet power arose. It compelled the S.R. and Menshevik E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet to hold another

debate on its attitude towards the Provisional Government (March 6-8). Seizing on this opportunity the Bolsheviks tried to get the March 2 decision revoked. A. G. Shlyapnikov writes in his memoirs: "We tried to prove to the majority [i.e., the Soviet's S.R. and Menshevik leadership.—A. A.] by the example of what had happened in the first week the incorrectness of its tactics. We again put forward our proposal that the parties and forces in the Soviet at that time form a Provisional Government."<sup>3</sup>

The leaders of the conciliatory parties were guided by different ideas. The organ of the United Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. (Mensheviks) *Rabochaya Gazeta* claimed that had the Petrograd Soviet taken power "it would have been an ephemeral rule as it could not have had authority with the bourgeoisie" (!).<sup>2</sup> The S.R. newspaper *Dyelo Naroda* wrote: "Our Party supports the Provisional Government, which is at war and which has developed a programme of broad democratic change."<sup>3</sup>

The petty-bourgeois socialists took a capitulationist stand during this second (repeat) debate of the Petrograd Soviet on the question of the organisation of power (March 6-8). They reduced everything to an examination of the formal, bureaucratic aspects of the question —the procedure for establishing links between the Soviet and the bourgeois Provisional Government.

The Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet then elected a delegation consisting of Chkhheidze, Skobelev, Steklov, Sukhanov and Filippovsky which was instructed "to get in immediate touch with the Provisional Government for the purposes of consultation". An "observation" committee was also set up which later came to be known as the Liaison Commission. The initiators of this Liaison Commission thought that it could "influence" and "control" the Government. In fact it came to nothing, since nobody took any account of it whatsoever. As one of the Commission's members, the Menshevik N. Sukhanov, admitted: "The functions of the Soviet's delegation [i.e., the Liaison Commission.—A. A.] are reduced to registering the steps already taken by the Government."<sup>4</sup> The class character of the Menshevik and S.R. parties revealed itself in this. Lenin remarked that "viewed from a Marxist angle, the 'conciliatory' attitude of the Narodnik and Menshevik leaders is a manifestation

<sup>1</sup> A. Shlyapnikov, 1917, Book 2, Moscow-Leningrad, 1925, pp. 154, 155 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Rabochaya Gazeta* (The Workers' Gazette), March 7, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Dyelo Naroda* (The People's Cause), March 15, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, p. 78 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, March 7, 1917.  
<sup>2</sup> Ibid., March 9, 1917.

of petty-bourgeois indecision. The petty bourgeoisie is afraid to trust the workers, and is afraid to break with the capitalists".<sup>1</sup>

With the establishment of the Provisional Government, dual power prevailed in Russia. This was a contradictory phenomenon but at the same time one consistent with the peculiar nature of Russia's socio-economic and political development at this time.

The victory of the February Revolution opened up a new phase in the country's life. The tsar's despotism, arbitrary rule and the deprivation of all rights, was abolished. Scores of millions of men and women who had formerly been unable to take any part in politics became politically aware and participated in public life. However, the great bulk of these millions was made up by the petty bourgeoisie, which wavered between the proletariat and the upper classes. This strongly influenced many working people, who, inexperienced in politics, did not recognise the demagogic character of the slogans of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties (who called themselves "socialists"). As a result the masses of the workers, soldiers and peasants had an essentially naive faith in the bourgeois Provisional Government and believed that, under the Soviets' "control", it would fulfil their aspirations.

The formation of the bourgeois Provisional Government was the logical completion of the consolidation of the bourgeoisie and its seizure of the key positions in the country's economy. Lenin observed that the Provisional Government was "not a fortuitous assemblage of persons",<sup>2</sup> but the organised representation of the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie and of those landlords who had become bourgeois. Relying now on the Provisional Government, and exploiting the conciliatory policy of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, the bourgeoisie began an offensive against the revolution. But it could not abolish dual power. The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies continued to have an active influence on all aspects of social life.

## 2. THE ROLE OF THE SOVIETS IN FORMING MASS WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS AND IN IMPROVING THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF WORKING PEOPLE

The formation of the Soviets of workers', soldiers' and other deputies was the visible product of the creative efforts of the millions who had been awakened by the February Revolution. In their turn

the Soviets of Deputies did a tremendous amount of fruitful work in restoring the various democratic organisations crushed by tsarism during the war and in establishing new trade unions and factory committees.<sup>1</sup>

The Soviets in the capital were the first to make a start on this work. The Department of Labour of the Petrograd Soviet treated its function of helping in the organisation of trade unions and factory and plant committees and in uniting the trade union movement on an all-Russia scale as one of its main tasks. The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies also decided on March 3 to begin restoring or setting up new trade unions immediately.

The Soviets of Deputies throughout the rest of the country gave much attention to organising the workers. The Saratov Soviet, on the initiative of the Bolsheviks, decided on March 2 to set up factory committees at all enterprises. The Omsk Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies planned to organise factory committees and trade unions as part of its programme. And the Soviets in Kiev and Yekaterinoslav recommended establishing factory and works committees.

The factory committees linked the Soviets to the broad working masses. That is why even in the early months of the Revolution there was a tendency to turn them into strongpoints of the Soviets at the places of work. This is confirmed by the Statutes of various Soviets and by other documents.

The Constitution of the Archangel Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, for example, stated that in order to keep in close touch with the workers, the Soviet would set up factory committees at all factories, which were to be guided in their work by the instructions of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>2</sup> The Statutes of the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies gave as one of the Soviet's principal tasks the uniting of the existing workers' organisations, the setting up of new ones and their further consolidation and development.<sup>3</sup> And the E.C. of the Kostroma Soviet of Workers' Deputies stated on March 6 that "factory committees are to convey to the working masses all the decisions of the Executive

<sup>1</sup> Factory and plant committees. As Russia's trade unions had for the most part a narrow craft basis, the factory committees, which united all the workers of a particular enterprise, were effective forms of working-class organisation. Later, in 1918, the factory committees merged with the trade unions.

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia After the Overthrow of Tsarism*, pp. 210-12 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet of Workers' Deputies, May 24, 1917.

Committee of the Soviet... and to carry on propaganda and agitation for the immediate setting up of trade unions".<sup>1</sup>

In early April 1917 Russia's trade unions united only 250,000 workers, but by May the number of trade union members had risen to one and a half million, and the number of Unions to some 2,000.<sup>2</sup> The restoration of the working-class organisations that tsarism had destroyed and the creation of new ones was one of the urgent tasks set by the Revolution. In dealing with this task the Soviets had also simultaneously to tackle the economic problems—primarily that of food.

The ruined agriculture and disorganised transport and the anti-popular policies of the tsarist and later of the Provisional Government left the country in extremely difficult conditions. In March 1917, about a million tons of grain had been held in store, but in April the figure was only some 400,000 tons. And the transportation of foodstuffs was in a terrible state of disarray.<sup>3</sup> Army rations per fighting soldier were cut to 2 pounds of bread a day, to 1½ pounds a day for workers, and for the rest of the population to three-quarters of a pound.<sup>4</sup> But even these semi-starvation rations were not always supplied. The Petrograd workers were quite literally starving. Moscow and other cities were almost without bread and the food crisis spread to the Army.

The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the central and other regions of the country had to take energetic steps to ease the situation and to save the population from famine. On March 5 the Petrograd Soviet Food Commission was informed by the supplies department of the Northern Front that there was not even one day's stock of flour left for the Army. On the same day Petrograd workers discovered on some railway sidings 180 trucks of grain consigned to private individuals. By a directive of the Food Commission these stocks were requisitioned and readdressed to the front lines. Then the Petrograd Soviet ordered another 26 trainloads of food to be sent to the soldiers in action.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia After the Overthrow of Tsarism*, p. 219 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> F. M. Leonidov and G. V. Petryakov, "The Rallying of the Working Class in the Period of Preparation for October", in *Voprosy Istorii K.P.S.S.* (Problems of History of the C.P.S.U.) No. 3, 1957, p. 25 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Stenographic Report*, Vol. 1, Moscow-Leningrad, 1930, pp. 129-30 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Documents of the All-Russia Food Congress Held in Moscow (May 21-25, 1917)*, Issue 2, Moscow, 1918, p. 8 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> *Prodovolstvenny Uestnik* (Food News), Organ of the Petrograd Central Foodstuffs Committee, July 30, 1917.

The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies appealed to other Soviets, requesting them to assist in procuring the needed quantities of grain and other foodstuffs. Delegations set out from Moscow for the 11 grain-producing gubernias in order to organise in conjunction with the local Soviets and foodstuffs committees the collection of foodstuffs and their transportation to the capital.<sup>1</sup>

The appeal of the Moscow Soviet received a warm response throughout the country. The following telegram was received from Simbirsk on April 24: "The spirit among the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies is high, ready to give all. The Gubernia Food Committee will dispatch 50 trucks at once...."<sup>2</sup>

A day later information came that after the report of the Moscow Soviet delegation was heard at a congress of railway workers of the Volga-Bugulma line 6 wagons of rye flour had been sent to Moscow. In Nizhne-Devitsk (Voronezh Gubernia) the arrival of the representative of the Moscow Soviet coincided with the opening of a congress of peasants, who decided to start carting flour to the station immediately.<sup>3</sup> News that food trains were on their way to Moscow came from Saratov, Voronezh, Kursk, Kharkov, Rostov-on-Don, Krasnodar and other places. In all, Moscow received over 2,000 trucks of flour during May.<sup>4</sup>

The Soviets of Krasnoyarsk, Izhevsk, Tomsk, Tashkent, Nikolayev and other cities also solved the problem of supplies in a revolutionary way. The E.C. of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet sent a cable along the Siberian Railway line forbidding delivery of food for speculative purposes. The food commission of the Izhevsk Soviet searched traders' premises with the help of the local population. Large stocks of flour and other provisions that were badly needed came to light. The Soviet then obliged all shopkeepers and owners of trading establishments to present figures of the food they had in stock both in the Izhevsk warehouses and en route to Izhevsk.

On the initiative of the Moscow Soviet an All-Russia Food Congress was called in May 1917. 333 delegates attended from Soviets, trade unions, co-operatives, labour exchange committees, and other bodies.<sup>5</sup> Provisional Government Ministers A. I. Shingaryov and A. V. Peshekhanov and E.C. members of the Petrograd Soviet Grozman, Maslov and Anisimov (all Mensheviks) spoke. They reiterated

<sup>1</sup> *Documents of the All-Russia Food Congress...*, Issue 2, pp. 57-58 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 64/40.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66.

<sup>5</sup> *Documents of the All-Russia Food Congress*, Issue 1, Moscow, 1917, p. 4 (Russ. ed.).

that tsarism had brought the nation's economy to ruin and called for support for the Provisional Government, but were silent on the role of the Soviets in the solution of the food crisis.

The speeches made by delegates from the Moscow, Samara, Arzamas, Skopino, Roslavl and other Soviets asserted that it was only in those places where the Soviets were involved in organising food supplies and relied on the initiative of the workers and the poorest peasants that definite results were being achieved. The speech of the E.C. member of the Tomsk Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, Bolshevik G. K. Sobolevsky, was particularly convincing. He reported that the Tomsk Soviet had removed the inert town Duma and assumed responsibility for all questions of grain procurement. This had enabled it to improve the food situation throughout the gubernia.<sup>1</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to suppose that the Soviets' efforts to overcome the food crisis were always successful. After the February Revolution food procurement was officially still organised by the Government, i.e., by the Zemstvo departments, city Dumas, and the uyezd and gubernia food committees. These consisted of propertied people who aided and abetted the landowners and the grain traders and obstructed the efforts of the Soviets to carry through revolutionary measures to improve the supply of food to the population.

Other important matters which the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies dealt with to a greater or lesser extent were the introduction of the 8-hour working day and improvements in the material conditions of working people.

The first big clash between workers and owners, the latter backed by the S.R.-Menshevik majority of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet, took place on the issue of the resumption of work after the general political strike of February 27-28. According to a decision of the Petrograd Soviet taken on March 5 the factories of the capital were to resume work everywhere not later than March 7. After taking into account the militant mood of the revolutionary workers the conciliators decided to make some concessions. The E.C. authorised Chkhheidze to work out the terms on which the Petrograd workers were to return to work. The draft terms envisaged the following: the owners were to pay wages for the days of the strike, collective bargaining was to be recognised, and factory committees were to be set up, etc. But the question of the introduction of the 8-hour working day was avoided. Moreover the Mensheviks carried on propaganda against its introduction in the press and in their speeches at workers'

meetings. They said it was an "untimely" step, and tried to frighten the workers and the soldiers with the threat of a catastrophe if this measure were taken—because, they said, it would involve "the radical break-up of the country's economic life". Tsereteli claimed that the Provisional Government recognised the 8-hour day in principle, but only "under normal conditions", i.e., after the war was over.<sup>1</sup>

The decision of the Petrograd Soviet to go back to work without a legal settlement of the issue of the 8-hour working day led to deep dissatisfaction among the workers. The Moscow Sub-District Soviet passed a resolution on March 7 condemning the actions of the City Soviet. It declared that it was not permissible for it to come to a decision on such an important matter as the resumption of work before preliminary discussions had taken place in the districts. Because the decision of the Petrograd Soviet was regarded as a wrong one by the workers of the Moscow Sub-District, their Soviet decided to defer carrying it out and instead proposed that the Petrograd Soviet be reorganised.<sup>2</sup> The deputies of the district Soviets in the Vyborg and other districts of Petrograd also came out against the decision of the City Soviet to resume work before the most pressing demands of the workers had been met. And by the middle of March nearly half the factories in Petrograd had introduced the 8-hour day themselves without waiting for legal sanction.

This united stand of the Petrograd proletariat compelled the owners and the conciliators to recognise the 8-hour working day and to meet other economic demands. On March 10, the Petrograd Soviet and the Society of Factory Owners agreed to introduce the 8-hour day at all city factories and to set up factory committees and arbitration councils.<sup>3</sup>

The Mensheviks and the S.R.s in Moscow tried to get the 8-hour day introduced by agreement with the owners. The leaders of the Moscow Soviet had long talks with the chairman of the Exchange Committee, S. N. Tretyakov, but he persistently refused to accept the idea. A conference of factory owners meeting at that time also rejected the 8-hour day. All this finally exposed the position of the S.R.-Menshevik majority in the Soviet. At the plenary meeting of the Moscow Soviet on March 16 the Bolshevik faction proposed the unsanctioned introduction of the 8-hour working day at all the city's

<sup>1</sup> I. G. Tsereteli, *Speeches*, Vol. I, Petrograd, 1917, p. 113 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia After the Overthrow of Tsarism*, p. 224 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Organisation and Building of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, pp. 58-60 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> *Documents of the All-Russia Food Congress*, Issue 2, pp. 56-57 (Russ. ed.).

enterprises. But the S.R.s and Mensheviks protested, insisting that "separate actions in the struggle for the 8-hour working day be regarded as impermissible". So a decision on the question was postponed.<sup>1</sup>

Two days later another plenary meeting of the Moscow Soviet was held—with the same topic on the agenda. The conciliators again attempted to get the Soviet to condemn the revolutionary start that had already been made by the Moscow proletariat. But the situation was changing rapidly. The 8-hour day had been introduced at most Moscow factories by March 18. Delegates representing the Blagushino, Butyrsky, Sokolniki, Lefortovo, Zamoskvorechye and other districts pointed out that the universal introduction of the 8-hour day had been decided on and the negative decision of the City Soviet on this issue "would be invalid".<sup>2</sup>

Under this pressure from the revolutionary workers the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies decided to demand from the Provisional Government a decree introducing the 8-hour working day; to appeal to all Soviets to support this demand; to introduce an 8-hour day in Moscow (7 hours for night work) on March 21; to require existing wages to be paid for the shorter day with double pay for overtime; and to empower the factory committees to decide when to permit overtime in consultation with the district Soviets.<sup>3</sup>

In March-April 1917 the struggle for the 8-hour working day assumed a country-wide scale. In some cities (Saratov, Samara, Yaroslavl, Odessa, Simferopol, Baku and others) the owners made concessions and agreed to the 8-hour working day. But in the majority of places the 8-hour day was introduced by the Soviets without legal sanction against the fierce resistance of the factory owners. This was the case in Kazan, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Rostov-on-Don, Kharkov, Kostroma and other cities.

One of the main reasons for the prolonged campaign for the introduction of the 8-hour day was the sabotage of the S.R.s and the Mensheviks. In a number of places the workers literally had to compel the Soviets to go further in this direction than the petty-bourgeois parties wanted. By late April the workers of most of the country's enterprises had introduced the 8-hour working day by revolutionary means. This was the first big victory of the Russian working class over the bourgeoisie.

In reply to the revolutionary introduction of the 8-hour day by

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, March 17 and 18, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat* (The Social-Democrat), Moscow, March 22, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the workers, and to other steps, factory owners began a mass campaign to close down factories. In the first half of the year shrinking production and growing unemployment resulted in the following picture<sup>1</sup>:

|          |     |                                 |        |        |
|----------|-----|---------------------------------|--------|--------|
| In March | 74  | factories were closed employing | 6,646  | people |
| " April  | 55  | " "                             | 2,816  | "      |
| " May    | 108 | " "                             | 8,701  | "      |
| " June   | 125 | " "                             | 38,455 | "      |
| " July   | 206 | " "                             | 47,754 | "      |

The prevailing disruption of the national economy, aggravated by the disorganising actions of the owners in the form of lock-outs, refusals to meet workers' minimum demands and so on, could be halted only by the Soviets taking emergency revolutionary-democratic measures such as the introduction of workers' control of the production and distribution of goods and of all financial and banking operations, together with the nationally organised allocation of the labour force to the various branches of the national economy and the establishing of broad trading relations between town and country.

But the Mensheviks and the S.R.s., who were in the majority in most Soviets, were against such effective measures. The petty-bourgeois "socialists" preferred speeches about "state interference [i.e., at that time by the state of the landowners and capitalists.—A. A.] in social relations and in the national economy", and about the possibility of realising "popular regulation" of the economy without touching the basis of the capitalist system, to the revolutionary path of economic reconstruction. All the activities of the Petrograd Soviet in this respect reduced themselves to the formal bureaucratic piling up of a variety of bodies supposedly authorised "to clear up the country's economic situation" but which in fact were doing nothing.

Throughout the rest of the country the Soviets' efforts to preserve the country's productive forces were more energetic. A plenary meeting of the Moscow Soviet indicated on March 28 that, in connection with the introduction of the 8-hour day, there was agitation of the owners against the workers in the city, and that many factory owners were closing their factories, curtailing production and disorganising public life. On a proposal of the Bolsheviks the Moscow Soviet set up a commission authorised to investigate the causes of

<sup>1</sup> V. P. Milyutin, *The Modern Economic Development of Russia and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Moscow, 1918, p. 16 (Russ. ed.).

closures and to act appropriately.<sup>1</sup> The Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet demanded from the Society of Factory Owners the resumption of work at all closed factories.

In some areas and cities where Bolshevik organisations enjoyed greater influence the Soviets became the bodies which actually managed production. In the Gorlovka-Shcherbinovka District of the Donbas, for instance, the work of all factories and mines was under the control of the Soviets' production commissions. Managements had no right to dismiss workers without their permission. This was the position in Lugansk, Kramatorsk and Makeyevka, too. In the Urals, the Soviets of Verkhnaya Tura, Ust-Katav, Nadezhdinsk and other towns forbade owners to close their factories and also laid down minimum wages, piece-work rates, etc.

In cases where owners would not agree to meet the workers' demands and made no concessions the Soviets resorted to requisitioning. For example the E.G. of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet requisitioned the local sawing mill and another mill belonging to the joint stock company "Abakan", and transferred them to the workers' trade union. And at the request of the workers, representatives of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet went to the gold and copper mines in Achinsk and Minusinsk uyezds to help in settling disputes that had arisen there. The outcome was that the Julia mine passed to the Minusinsk Soviet and workers' administrations were set up at the Joannovsky and Andreyevsky mines.<sup>2</sup> Again, the Mytishchy District Soviet of Workers' Deputies (Moscow Gubernia) took over the Viskoza artificial silk factory as its management had closed it down while adequate stocks of raw materials and fuel still remained.<sup>3</sup> Such workers' management did not become widespread in the first months of the Revolution. Nevertheless, these initiatives of the workers, encouraged by the Bolsheviks, were of great importance for the growth of the proletariat's class awareness.

The active participation of the Soviets that were led by Bolsheviks in the economic struggle of the working class lent it a political character, widening its scope and making it an important means of rallying the proletariat round its revolutionary party.

In the Central Industrial Area the leading role of the Bolshevik Soviets there was demonstrated during a strike of textile workers in Orekhovo-Zuyev and other cities of the Moscow and Vladimir

gubernias. Factory owners such as the Morozovs, Smirnov and Runov refused to meet workers' demands for a wage rise, the introduction of the 8-hour day and better working conditions. Making excuses about an alleged shortage of raw materials, wear and tear to equipment, and the like, they tried to close down their factories but met with the united resistance of the workers. The Orekhovo-Zuyev Soviet of Workers' Deputies sent its representatives to Morozov's mill to inspect the state of production in it and the workers' living conditions.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the Orekhovo-Zuyev Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the textile worker's trade union called on the workers of neighbouring mills to join in a united struggle. This call received an immediate response. The workers of Likino, Bogorodsk, Pavlov-Posad and other townships demanded from the owners not only a pay rise and improved working conditions but assistance to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies in assessing existing stocks of cotton.

This struggle of the Orekhovo-Zuyev workers against the owners and the firm action taken by the local Soviet were supported by the workers of the entire Central Industrial Area. The Soviet of Workers' Deputies of Drezna railway station issued a directive as follows: "We act with energy.... Got in touch with the Orekhovo-Zuyev District Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies...." And when workers at the Glukhovo Mill (Bogorodsk Uyezd, Moscow Gubernia) heard a report by the Bolshevik A. S. Vedernikov (representing the Moscow Soviet) on May 5, they resolved to "act in solidarity with the Orekhovo-Zuyev comrades. We endorse the decision they have made and request support from the Moscow Soviet for our urgent and fair demands".<sup>2</sup>

Workers' delegations went to Orekhovo-Zuyev from Kostroma, Yaroslavl, Smolensk and other towns. They saw that the textile workers' demands were fair ones and made speeches of solidarity<sup>3</sup>. The deputies of the Vladimir Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies rendered active assistance to the Orekhovo-Zuyev workers by going to see for themselves the labour conditions of the textile workers and help work out their demands to the mill-owners.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. M. Zryachkin, "Chronicle of the Revolutionary Events of 1917 in the Orekhovo-Zuyev District (March-October)"—An Historical Study of the Locality, Collection of Articles, Issue 2, Moscow, 1959, p. 59 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, May 20, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Moscow Province in 1917*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, p. 37 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis. Documents and Materials*, Moscow, 1959, pp. 383-84 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> Y. Ignatov, *The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, p. 217 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Krasnoyarsk Soviet (March 1917-June 1918)*, p. 508 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, June 6, 1917.

The Orekhovo-Zuyevo workers then called an emergency meeting on May 17, to which 18,000 men and women went. The Bolsheviks A. S. Vedernikov, Y. D. Zevin and V. I. Solovyov, representing the Moscow Soviet, reported on the existing situation and the meeting passed a unanimous resolution confirming all the former demands that had been put forward by the workers and directing the Orekhovo-Zuyevo Soviet "to secure normal capacity production and protection from the mismanagement of the administration by establishing control over all mills, warehouses and offices".<sup>1</sup>

The miners of the Donbas and the workers in the oilfields around Baku also took determined action against the owners. Pressed by the proletariat of the Donbas the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Yekaterinoslav and the Kharkov Meeting of Representatives of the Soviets of the Donbas were forced to intervene in the struggle of the workers against the mine owners and to try to get from the Ministry of Labour a decision on a pay rise. The Baku oilfield owners refused to sign a collective agreement with the workers and threatened to stop production. This resistance was only broken after the Baku Soviet decided to arrest saboteurs and send them to the front lines and to requisition the oilfields.

Steps to halt the economic deterioration and to preserve the forces of production were constantly being discussed by the Moscow City and district Soviets. Bolshevik resolutions demanding the establishment of workers' control over production were adopted by the Soviets of the Zamoskvorechye, Lefortovo, Zheleznodorozhny, Rogozhsko-Simonovsky and Presnya districts. But the S.R. and Menshevik E.C. of the City Soviet rejected the practical proposals of the Bolshevik faction.<sup>2</sup> The Mensheviks and the S.R.s opposed the Bolsheviks' revolutionary programme for the solution of the country's economic problems with their utopian schemes for "making the country healthy" with the help of the bourgeois Provisional Government and the conciliatory Soviets. Exposing the tricks and intrigues of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties, Lenin wrote: "To appeal now to the 'state' and to 'revolutionary democracy' on the matter of predatory capitalism of all questions, is to drag the working class backward. In effect it means preaching complete stoppage of the revolution."<sup>3</sup>

Only a victorious socialist revolution could relieve the nation of its economic devastation and save countless millions from poverty and ruin.

<sup>1</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, May 18, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, June 16, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 563.

### 3. DIRECTIVE NO. 1 OF THE PETROGRAD SOVIET. THE EMERGENCE OF THE SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' COMMITTEES

Alongside the workers, the mass of the soldiers made up one of the main forces of the February Revolution. The soldiers of the Petrograd garrison, the sailors of the Baltic Fleet and the reserve regiments in many towns of the country took an active part in the fight against tsarism and in consolidating the victory over it. Together with the workers they sought a democratic solution of the questions of peace and land and the establishment of control over production and distribution. In addition, the soldiers strove to do away with oppression and arbitrary rule in the Army, with the soldiers' and sailors' lack of rights and the unlimited power of reactionary officers.

The struggle for the democratisation of the Army began on the first day of the Revolution. The bellicose speeches of Rodzyanko and Milyukov and the attempts of the military commission of the State Duma to make the insurgent soldiers go back to their barracks and obey their officers led to a great deal of unrest in the Petrograd garrison, and the pressure from the soldiers was so strong that it had to be taken into account. A meeting of the Petrograd Soviet decided on March 1 that the soldiers should obey only the Soviet in all political matters. The orders of the State Duma's military commission were to be disregarded unless they were in line with those of the Soviet.<sup>1</sup> But the regiments' deputies were not content with a simple statement of this decision. Immediately after the meeting a group of soldiers led by Bolsheviks A. D. Sadovsky and A. N. Padarin surrounded N. D. Sokolov, an E. C. member of the Soviet, and made him give formal shape to the decision moved and formulated at the sitting at once. The revolutionary activity of the soldiers resulted in the issue of Directive No. 1, addressed to the Petrograd Military District garrison. This endorsed the most important of the soldiers' demands—that requiring the setting up of elected soldiers' and sailors' committees in all Army and Navy units of the Petrograd garrison, with these obeying the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies as lower organs of the Soviet. All arms were to be placed in the charge and under the control of company and battalion committees and they were under no circumstances to be handed over to officers, even on demand. Soldiers and sailors received the same rights as other citizens, the mentioning of titles

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 1000.

when addressing officers was ended and commanders were expected to be polite and show respect for soldiers. The Directive was to be announced at once in all companies, battalions, regiments, batteries, and other units of both the combatant and non-combatant forces.<sup>1</sup>

The revolutionary initiative shown by the soldiers' deputies, the authors of this first order of their own, was of the greatest significance, as this turned the Petrograd Soviet into a comprehensive revolutionary mass body and placed all the Army and Navy units of the garrison with their munitions and equipment at the disposal of the Soviet. This won the Soviet tremendous authority not only among the Petrograd soldiers but throughout the entire Army. It was no accident, therefore, that Kerensky said later that "he would give ten years of his life for that order not to have been signed at all".<sup>2</sup>

The right to elect representatives to the Petrograd Soviet was extended not only to the troops of the Petrograd garrison but to those stationed throughout the Petrograd Military District, covering the Petrograd, Novgorod and Pskov gubernias. The sailors of the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets and the flotillas stationed in the Arctic Ocean and on the Siberian and Amur rivers sent delegates to maintain constant contact with the Soviet in the capital. These delegates formed a Seamen's Section attached to the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet on April 5, 1917.<sup>3</sup>

All this proves that many millions of soldiers and sailors saw in the Petrograd Soviet a higher authority of their own, i.e., a people's power, and that they tried to establish the closest relations with it.

The significance of Directive No. 1 for the Army and the Navy, and the force of its revolutionising impact on the soldiers and sailors, was not lost on the Provisional Government and the High Command. General M. V. Alexeyev, Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, sent a cable on March 3 to all commanders-in-chief of the different fronts ordering that the delegations that were being sent from Petrograd for revolutionary agitation among the soldiers be "taken into custody and court-martialled on the spot".<sup>4</sup>

It was, however, impossible to keep the Army in subjection by means of deception or repressions in the revolutionary atmosphere that now prevailed. The soldiers at the front found out about

Directive No. 1 from those who had been on leave, from the Bolshevik agitators and through other channels. They considered it correct and acted in accordance with it.

The Petrograd reserve regiments began to elect their commanding officers on March 2. Following the Petrograd garrison, who gave the lead, soldiers in other towns dismissed their senior officers. News of this came in from Bryansk, Vyborg, Mozdok, Chita, Irkutsk and Khabarovsk, and from the Western, Northern and Caucasian Fronts. The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies actively participated in discharging reactionary generals and other officers. Information supplied by General M. V. Alexeyev on March 4 stated that the Soldiers' Soviets at Vyborg, Kharkov and Kaluga had arrested their garrison commanders and military commandants and replaced them by men "enjoying the trust of the soldiers". The High Command and the commanders of the various fronts showered the Provisional Government with telegrams complaining about the "corrupting" influence of the Petrograd Soviet.

The desire of the most politically conscious sections of the Army and Navy, including revolutionary-minded officers, to introduce democracy into the forces alarmed not only the High Command and the Provisional Government but also the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet. They began to wonder how they could paralyse the revolutionising effect of Directive No. 1. They concluded that it was necessary to issue a further Directive, No. 2, signed both by the Soviet's E.C. and the Minister of War. The content of this document leaves one in no doubt that it was aimed at preventing any deepening of the revolution in the Army.

To begin with it attempted to reduce to a bare minimum the rights of soldiers' committees, especially their rights in the election of commanding personnel. It claimed that the soldiers' committees had not been authorised by Directive No. 1 to elect officers at all and "explained" that the problem of what should be the limits to the rights of company, battalion and other committees had been handed over to a special commission for examination, and that the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet had appointed a team consisting of Skobelev, Sokolov, Gvozdyov, Steklov and Kudryavtsev to negotiate with the War Minister A. I. Guchkov.

The bourgeoisie and the High Command made skilful use of the S.R. and Menshevik leaders' inclination to look to the Provisional Government for approval of all their actions. On March 6 a delegation from General Ruzsky, Commander of the Northern Front, appeared at a meeting of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet that was

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, March 2, 1917.  
<sup>2</sup> A. I. Denikin, *Sketches of the Disturbances in Russia*, Vol. I, Issue 1, Paris, 1921, p. 66 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> S. A. Artemyev, *The Bolsheviks' Struggle to Win Over the Soviets in 1917 in the Period of Dual Power*, Moscow, 1951 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia after the Overthrow of Tsarism*, p. 606 (Russ. ed.).

discussing the issue of Directive No. 2. The delegation claimed that the Soviet's orders were "corrupting the Army", that soldiers refused to obey their officers and did not abide by Army regulations, etc. The frightened Mensheviks and S.R.s agreed to send a representative of the Soviet to the Northern Front Headquarters, to postpone the issue of Directive No. 2 (in spite of its "moderate" character) and to send a cable to all fronts "explaining" that both Directives No. 1 and No. 2 applied only to the Petrograd garrison, and that for the rest of the Army "special rules will be elaborated in accordance with the basic principles of the new state system".

This behaviour of the S.R.-Menshevik leadership of the Petrograd Soviet E.C. was fully in line with the policy of the Provisional Government. A. I. Guchkov had already issued an Order (No. 114) the day before, on March 5, reorganising the Army.<sup>1</sup> But compared to Directive No. 1, worked out by the revolutionary soldiers themselves, Guchkov's order was very limited. It made only a few minor concessions to the soldiers in the manner of addressing officers (by omitting titles) and in the cancellation of the most petty restrictions of the rights of men serving in the forces (such as those forbidding them to smoke in the streets and in public places, or to take a tram). Order No. 114 made no mention of the organisation of soldiers' committees in the Army, let alone the election of commanding officers.

While the Menshevik and S.R. leaders of the Petrograd Soviet were conducting endless negotiations with Guchkov and taking "agreed" action with the Provisional Government, the High Command was taking steps to bring the soldiers' movement for the formation of committees and Soviets under control. General Alexeyev sent a secret order on March 11 to all the commanders of the fronts and armies, which admitted confidentially: "The Provisional Government does not really have any power at all, which is concentrated entirely in the hands of the Petrograd Soviet. Any directive of the Government can therefore appear only with the agreement of the Soviet...." Senior officers were advised to organise special committees of "suitable people" at the front lines and to invite members of the State Duma onto them. In conclusion, the tsarist general gave advice on how to "penetrate" the soldiers' committees: "Where a soldiers' committee has been formed against a Commander's will, he should get officers onto them to guide their development."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, March 8, 1917.  
<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia After the Overthrow of Tsarism*, pp. 627, 628 (Russ. ed.).

General Alexeyev's order was followed without delay. General A. A. Brusilov, Commander of the South-Western Front, reported on March 12: "I have given orders for the setting up of committees in each of the 4 armies and the headquarters of the front entrusted to me, involving suitable members of the Zemgor<sup>1</sup> and other public bodies working at the front. Each corps will form its own committee of officers and men." In order to give greater authority to such "spontaneously formed" committees Brusilov requested the War Minister "to commission to the front lines some of the members of the State Duma and of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies who supported the war".<sup>2</sup>

The same thing happened with the Black Sea Fleet. A meeting of the Sevastopol garrison elected a Provisional Military Executive Committee on March 5, consisting of 20 sailors and soldiers. Admiral Kolchak, the Fleet Commander, subsequently succeeded in getting a considerable number of officers onto the soldiers' and sailors' committees. After officers' representatives had been adopted onto the Provisional Military Executive Committee it came to be known as the United Central Military Executive Committee (U.C.M.E.C.). Most of its members were S.R.s and Mensheviks.<sup>3</sup>

So in the largest Army and Navy units (armies, fleets and fronts) committees were formed from above, frequently with high commanding personnel taking part in this work. Such committees included many "public figures" (Cadets among them). These "transformations" from above were opposed by the mass revolutionary and democratic movement of the soldiers and sailors, who wanted to set up committees in companies, regiments, battalions, and on ships, etc. On March 1 the crew of the cruiser *Aurora* elected by secret ballot a ship's committee. On March 3 a committee was elected on board the battleship *Andrei Pervozvanny*, and the battleships *Republika* (Republic), *Slava* (Glory), *Grazhdanin* (Citizen) and other vessels of the Baltic Fleet also elected committees early in March. P. A. Golub estimates that 50,000 committees emerged in the Army and Navy with a membership of some 300,000 men.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Zemgor—short for the joint committee of what were called the Zemstvo and City Unions, which were all-Russia organisations of the landowners and the bourgeoisie set up to help tsarism in waging the imperialist war. Zemgor's main function was that of converting the petty and handicrafts industry to military rails.

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia After the Overthrow of Tsarism*, p. 629.

<sup>3</sup> A. I. Verkhovsky, *Negotiating a Difficult Pass*, Moscow, 1959, pp. 179, 181 and 437 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> P. Golub, *The Party, the Army and the Revolution*, Moscow, 1967, p. 34 (Russ. ed.).

The Bolsheviks regarded the soldiers' and sailors' committees as an embryonic form of revolutionary power in the armed forces. The Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), in a directive issued on March 10, 1917, pointed out that the introduction of democratic changes in the armed forces, the election of company, battalion and other committees, were among the practical tasks in the further development of the Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

A great amount of work was done among the soldiers by the Army Organisation of the Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), formed in March 1917. Its active workers were N. V. Krylenko, K. A. Mekhonoshin, N. I. Podvoisky, S. N. Sulimov, A. D. Sadovsky and others. The newspaper *Soldatskaya Pravda* was published in Petrograd from April 15 and played a big part in winning the mass of the soldiers to the side of the Revolution.

The Bolshevik organisations in the armed forces were not very numerous at this time but every Communist in them had a profound sense of his responsibility for the cause of his Party and was therefore a tireless agitator and propagandist. N. V. Krylenko said in his speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets (June 1917) that despite the orders of Guchkov and Alexeyev the Bolsheviks "were forming revolutionary organisations from below".<sup>2</sup>

These organisations in the armed forces presented their programme in *Pravda* on March 21. It was called "The Main Programme of the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies at the Front Lines" and had been worked out with the active participation of the soldiers. It received the unanimous approval of a meeting of members of the regimental and other committees of the Northern Front.

The Programme defined the tasks of the soldiers' Soviets and committees as follows: to organise the soldiers for the purpose of opposing the attempts of counter-revolutionary forces to restore tsarism, to campaign for elections to the Constituent Assembly, for peaceful negotiations between the belligerent nations, for control of the key sections of headquarters by soldiers' committees, for freedom of speech, press, and assembly, the spreading of political rights to the armed forces, the confiscation of landowners' estates and state and church land, the introduction of an 8-hour working day, and the establishing of an international alliance to supervise general disarmament, etc. The representatives of the regimental committees

<sup>1</sup> L. Gaponenko, *The Soldiers of the Western Front in the Struggle for Soviet Power. 1917*, Moscow, 1953, pp. 24-25 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> N. V. Krylenko, "Speech at the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies." See *The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Vol. I, pp. 179-86 (Russ. ed.).

declared that they regarded "the Petrograd Soviet as the only defender of the people's interests" and that they would therefore support it with all the power at their disposal.<sup>1</sup>

In the early days of the February Revolution a committee was formed in the 436th Novoladozhsky Infantry Regiment (Northern Front, 12th Army) that was Bolshevik in composition. It carried out explanatory work among the soldiers and established contacts with other regiments. By the middle of March there were soldiers' committees in all the units of the 43rd corps and the Bolshevik F. P. Khaustov was elected chairman of the corps committee. Early in April *Okopnaya Pravda*, a Bolshevik newspaper, began to appear, and this acted as a political rallying point for revolutionary-minded soldiers.<sup>2</sup>

Delegates from the Lettish Rifle Regiments held a meeting in Riga on March 27-29 with 176 soldiers and 14 officers present. They elected the Executive Committee of the Soviet of the Lettish Rifle Regiments known as Iskolastrel. A Left bloc was formed inside it consisting of Bolsheviks, Latvian Social-Democrats and S.R.s who opposed the conciliatory E.C. majority.<sup>3</sup>

The city Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, particularly their Bolshevik factions, played a big part in the formation of the soldiers' committees. On March 8, on M. V. Frunze's proposal, the Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies adopted a resolution entitled "On Organising the Army along Democratic Lines". This embodied Lenin's idea of allying the working class with the peasantry and emphasised that "in all their political actions the soldiers must obey only the leadership of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and their own committees".<sup>4</sup>

On April 4, in Helsingfors, the crews of the battleship *Grazhdanin* and the cruiser *Admiral Makarov* held a combined meeting at which it was proposed to the sailors' committees that they "form a common Soviet of deputies". That is how the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet (Centrobalt), which played such a great part in the preparations for and in carrying through the October Socialist Revolution, came into being.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, March 21, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> F. P. Khaustov, *Okopnaya Pravda* (Trench Truth). See in *Krasnaya Letopis* No. 3 (24), 1927, pp. 108-14 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> A. Drizulis, *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Latvia*, p. 28 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, March 10, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *The Baltic Sailors in Preparing for and Carrying Through the Great October Socialist Revolution*, p. 55 (Russ. ed.).

On April 28 the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet held its first meeting. An interim constitution was adopted defining the aims and the organisational structure of Centrobalt, which was recognised as "the highest organ of all the fleet committees of the Baltic Sea without whose approval all orders relating to the internal and administrative life of the Baltic Fleet are invalid".<sup>1</sup> At first Centrobalt had 33 members, including six Bolsheviks and six sympathisers. P. Y. Dybenko, a Bolshevik and a member of the Helsingfors Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), was elected Chairman.<sup>2</sup>

From the very beginning of its existence Centrobalt functioned as the highest organ of the ships' and other committees and enjoyed great authority among the sailors. Not a single order from Navy Command, or decision of any other body, was obeyed in the Fleet without its approval. On March 21, 1917, Centrobalt issued the following statement to the Fleet: "The decisions of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet that are worked out in agreement with the Baltic Fleet Commander have the validity of orders."<sup>3</sup>

The soldiers' and sailors' committees had largely completed their formation by the end of the first six or eight weeks of the Revolution. Then congresses and conferences of the corps, armies, fleets and fronts followed. They discussed their attitude to the Provisional Government, to the war and to democratisation in the armed forces, and elected Army, fleet and front committees. The first congress of Baltic Fleet representatives and the congresses of delegates of the Northern and Western Fronts held jointly with representatives of the rear areas were of great importance in uniting the soldiers and sailors and involving them actively in the Revolution.

The representatives of the Baltic Fleet held their first congress in Helsingfors between May 25 and June 15. They discussed the report of Centrobalt on its work, the drafts of the statute of the ships' committees and of the constitution of Centrobalt. There was a struggle at the congress between the Bolsheviks and the "defencists" (those who favoured the continuation of the war). Delegates were offered two draft constitutions, one worked out by Centrobalt and the second presented by the Provisional Government commissar and by Navy Command. On a motion of Bolshevik N. G. Mar-

kin the congress approved the draft constitution offered by Centrobalt.<sup>1</sup> The appeal adopted by the congress read: "Let there no longer be the Helsingfors, Revel, Kronstadt and other fleets, but a single Baltic Fleet, with a voice of authority that will be heard all over free Russia—for our power is in unity, comrades, and in unity alone!"<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after this congress Centrobalt increased in number to 68 members, the influence of the Bolsheviks and their sympathisers having grown considerably. The Bolshevik core of Centrobalt consisted of the following people: P. Y. Dybenko, N. A. Khovrin, F. S. Averichkin, A. S. Shtarev, G. I. Silin, N. F. Izmailov, I. P. Sapozhnikov, P. D. Malkov, A. V. Baranov and some others. They waged a selfless struggle to "Bolshevise" Centrobalt, i.e., to make it a militant revolutionary centre of the Baltic Fleet.

A congress of delegates of the rear areas of the Northern Front was held in Pskov from April 16 to 20 with about a 100 representatives from uyezd and gubernia (city) Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, as well as Army units at the front lines and logistical units of the Northern Front. The conciliatory parties were in the majority at the congress, but they did not succeed in getting unconditional approval of "defencist" resolutions.<sup>3</sup>

The first congress of soldiers' and workers' deputies from both the front line and rear areas of the Western Front was held from April 7 to 17. Delegations came to Minsk from all the fronts and from the soldiers and workers of the cities of Byelorussia and also from Smolensk, Kaluga, Bryansk, Vyazma, Yartsev and Rzhev. The Central and Moscow Committees of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) sent V. P. Nogin and A. Y. Badayev to the Minsk congress. And the Bolsheviks of Minsk and the Western Front sent M. V. Frunze (leader of the delegation), A. F. Myasnikov, I. A. Alibegov, I. Y. Lyubimov, V. S. Seleznyov, V. V. Fomin, and B. P. Pozern.

In his speech at the congress Frunze said that the Army must not be above politics in time of revolution, that only "the organised and close unity of the soldiers with the workers and the peasant poor led by the proletarian party can form the basis of the new order and be the guarantee of final victory over the bourgeoisie and

<sup>1</sup> *The Minutes and Decisions of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet*, Moscow, 1963, p. 35 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> P. Sivkov, *The Sailors of the Baltic Fleet in the Struggle for Soviet Power in 1917*, p. 27 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Minutes and Decisions of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet*, p. 59 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> S. S. Hesin, D. A. Chugayev, "The Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet", *Minutes and Decisions...*, Collection, p. 10 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Baltic Sailors in the Preparations for and the Carrying Through of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, p. 81 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> A. Shlyapnikov, *The Year 1917*, Book 4, Moscow-Leningrad, 1931, pp. 105-07 (Russ. ed.).

the landlords'.<sup>1</sup> The Bolsheviks proposed that the congress adopt a resolution demanding an immediate end to the war, the transfer of the land to the peasants and all power to the Soviets. But under the pressure of the conciliators and their followers, who comprised the majority, the congress adopted the resolutions of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s.

The congress elected an Executive Committee of the Western Front of 75 men, which included six Bolsheviks. Nine members, including 2 Bolsheviks, comprised the Presidium of the E.C. The congress's approval of a draft Constitution of the Soldiers' Organisations and Soviets of Soldiers', Workers' and Peasants' Organisations of the Western Front was one important result of its work. This envisaged a unified system of soldiers' organisations from the trenches at the front lines to the garrisons in the rear. The congress also recognised the need for close contacts between the independent soldiers' organisations and the Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies.<sup>2</sup>

So, from the beginning of the February Revolution the soldiers and sailors campaigned for democracy in the Army and Navy. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s, who had majorities in the soldiers' and sailors' organisations, tried to restrict the initiative of the revolutionary masses. But the Bolsheviks continued their organisational and political work, rallying the ranks of the sailors and the soldiers, and waging a persistent struggle to win the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies and the committees in the Army and the Navy over to their side.

#### 4. THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. THE EMERGENCE OF THE SOVIETS OF PEASANTS' DEPUTIES

The overthrow of tsarism led to an upsurge in the peasants' revolutionary movement, and it spread in a short time to nearly all agricultural gubernias. There was unrest in the Central Black Earth Belt and the Central Industrial Area, throughout the Volga and Don Areas, in the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic Area, the North-West (Petrograd, Pskov and Novgorod gubernias), the Urals Area (Perm

<sup>1</sup> *The History of the Byelorussian S.S.R.*, Vol. II, Minsk, 1961, pp. 14-15 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, April 9, 14 and 17, 1917.

and Ufa gubernias) and in Siberia. Peasants' actions to abolish land-ownership grew in scope every month. The peasant movement covered 34 uyezds in March, 174 in April, 236 in May, 280 in June and 325 in July.

The experience that the peasants had received in 1905 indicated the best form of political organisation for the movement. In the first weeks of the February Revolution revolutionary peasants' committees began to emerge in the countryside. The Bolsheviks supported these committees in every possible way and strove to guide their activities and to rally them round the Soviets.

The peasants saw their leaders in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The peasants of Korobovshchina Volost (Pokrov Uyezd, Vladimir Gubernia) elected a delegate on March 5 "to maintain constant contact with the Moscow Soviet and the Moscow Committee of the workers' party".<sup>1</sup> The peasants of the village of Batishchevo-Yepishevo (Tula Gubernia) wrote to the department for the provinces of the Moscow Soviet: "We have faith in the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and hope that the workers will support the poor and not allow capitalism to oppress them."<sup>2</sup>

The movement of the working peasantry to establish lasting relations with the city Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies greatly deepened the bourgeois-democratic revolution and helped develop it into a socialist one. In his "Letters from Afar" Lenin wrote that the Bolsheviks must take advantage of the relative freedom brought about by the February Revolution and the emergence of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to *enlighten* and *organise* the vast masses of Russia's small peasantry. "Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and Soviets of Agricultural Workers—that is one of our most urgent tasks."<sup>3</sup>

The process of the political organisation of the peasantry was particularly intense in the industrial gubernias of Central Russia and in the Urals and the Donbas, where the factory workers had close links with the countryside.

The Soviets of Workers' Deputies of Alexandrov, Murom, Kovrov, Orekhovo-Zuyev, Podolsk and other towns of the Moscow and Vladimir gubernias sent their representatives into the countryside. They were set the task of organising Soviets of Peasants' Deputies

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia After the Overthrow of Tsarism*, pp. 667, 668 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 307.

and linking them up with the workers' and soldiers' Soviets of deputies.<sup>1</sup>

In the Ukraine much attention was paid to organising the peasantry by the Kiev, Kharkov, Nikolayev, Poltava and Kherson Soviets, among others. On a motion of Bolshevik V. M. Shakhrai the Poltava Soviet passed a resolution on May 24 on the need to form Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. A report by the Chairman of the Nikolayev Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, Y. Ryappo, on August 22, 1917 said: "All the work of organising the peasants' Soviets had now been completed with the active assistance of the peasants' commission of the Nikolayev Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies." Peasants were called on twice to attend conferences arranged by the Yekaterinoslav and Kherson Soviets. And the Druzhkov, Zolotonosha, Mariupol and other Soviets repeatedly discussed the question of the formation of peasants' Soviets.<sup>2</sup>

The Soviets of Peasants' Deputies appeared first of all in the gubernia centres and the uyezd towns. There were few volost (district) Soviets in 1917, and the village Soviets began to appear only after the victory of the October Socialist Revolution.

The organisation of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies took place in a complex political situation and in conditions of sharp struggle between the various political parties. The peasantry was far less homogeneous than the working class. Poor peasants made up 65% of the rural population in 1917, middle peasants 20% and kulaks 15%.<sup>3</sup>

The interests of the poorest peasants coincided with those of the workers and therefore received the support of the Bolshevik Party. As for the middle and small peasants, the S.R.s enjoyed the greatest influence among them. Preaching a doctrine of Russia's "special path" of development, the S.R.s were the violent enemies of the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat and therefore rejected the idea that the alliance of the working class and the poorest peasantry was the decisive force in the socialist revolution. The Socialist-Revolutionaries came out against the independent organisation of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. The Petrograd S.R. newspaper *Zemlya i Volya* wrote that the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies were non-party bodies and should therefore "represent the peasantry as

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683; N. Shakhanov, 1917 in *Vladimir Gubernia (Record of Events)*, Vladimir, 1927, p. 25 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *October and the Civil War in the U.S.S.R.*, Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1966, pp. 152, 153, 155 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The National Economy of the U.S.S.R. in 1956*, Statistical Year-Book, Moscow, 1957, p. 104 (Russ. ed.).

a whole, as a class, and rally it as a united mass".<sup>1</sup> And when the movement of the labouring peasantry to form Soviets became a mass movement, the S.R.s began active propaganda to keep the peasants' organisations "independent" of the workers' organisations on the grounds that the Russian countryside had "interests of its own".<sup>2</sup>

The Provisional Government also attempted to take control of the peasants' movement to set up political organisations of their own. It sent an instruction to the commissars of gubernias on March 20 ordering them to set up volost (district) committees "in order to ensure uninterrupted supplies to the Army, maintain public order, preserve buildings intact and keep the management business in the hands of the volost boards".<sup>3</sup> In practice, the main purpose of these bodies was to preserve the property of the landlords and the country bourgeoisie. However, the attempt of the Cadet and Octobrist Government to steer the revolutionary and democratic movement in the countryside into grooves that suited itself failed. A resolution passed by the All-Russia Co-operative Congress "On the Participation of Co-operatives in the Reconstruction of the Country" (March 25-28, 1917) is proof of this. The Congress, which represented 12 million co-operators or 50 million of the country's population, recognised the Soviets as "the best form of peasants' organisation". Lenin noted in this connection that "the organisation of the peasants, carried out from below without the officials and without the 'control and supervision' of the landowners and their hangers-on, is the only reliable pledge of success for the revolution, for freedom, for the liberation of Russia from the yoke and bondage of the landowners".<sup>4</sup> The leader of the Revolution expressed his firm belief that all Bolsheviks and class-conscious workers would support the organisation of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, strive to increase their number, and work within them to secure strict adherence to the proletarian class line.

In early April 1917 the representatives of the peasants' Soviets of eight gubernias met in Moscow. They discussed the question of creating an all-Russia centre of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and of preparing for the convocation of the first All-Russia Congress of

<sup>1</sup> *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Freedom), Petrograd, April 13, 1917 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. A. Kilchevsky, *The Soviets of Peasants' Deputies*, Moscow, 1917; A. P. Omelchenko, *The Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and the Peasants' Union*, Moscow, 1917 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>3</sup> *Collected Circulars of the Ministry of Home Affairs for March-June 1917*, Petrograd, 1917, p. 53 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 167-68.

Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.<sup>1</sup> One week later a similar kind of meeting was called in Petrograd, but with representatives from the peasants' organisations and the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies of 20 gubernias attending. Lenin came out at that time with an article in *Pravda* entitled "The Congress of Peasants' Deputies". He explained that the power of the peasants' movement and its success depended above all else on the lasting alliance of the peasants' Soviets and committees with the organisations of the city proletariat. And Lenin regarded the unity of the various proletarian elements proper (field hands, day-labourers and the like) *within* the general peasants' Soviets as a vital condition for the further progress of the Revolution in the countryside, and recommended the organisation of separate Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies in some places.<sup>2</sup>

By late July 1917, 52 gubernias out of 78 had gubernia Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.<sup>3</sup> Peasants' Soviets began to appear in the uyezds in March but their organisation lagged considerably behind. Only 371 uyezds out of the 813 uyezds of Russia had Soviets of Peasants' Deputies on July 15.<sup>4</sup> In the overwhelming majority of gubernias and uyezds the peasants' Soviets existed apart from the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. It was to be a long time before the Bolshevik Party succeeded in creating a single and harmonious system of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country.

##### 5. THE FIRST ALL-RUSSIA CONGRESS OF SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES. FORMATION OF REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SOVIETS

The Soviets of Deputies, the organs of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants, were called upon to settle vital political, social and economic problems, and it was therefore natural that they should seek to establish close relations with one another and to form associations within districts, areas, regions and, later, on the level of the entire country.

In early March the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet appealed to the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets "to call an All-Russia Workers' Con-

<sup>1</sup> *The Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and Other Peasants' Organisations*, Vol. I, p. 1, Collection of Documents, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, p. 46 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, pp. 167-70, 593.

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, July 25, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> T. A. Remezova, "The Soviets of Peasants' Deputies in 1917", *Historical Notes*, Vol. 32, pp. 15-16 (Russ. ed.).

gress in the near future [i.e., a Congress of Soviets.—A. A.] in order to settle the question of the Constituent Assembly".<sup>1</sup> And the Smolensk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies passed a resolution on March 14: "To treat as a matter of urgent necessity the convening of an All-Russia Congress of Representatives of the Soviets of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies at an early date, and to authorise the Executive Committee to get in touch on this matter with the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies."<sup>2</sup> The Omsk, Tambov and other Soviets adopted similar decisions.<sup>3</sup>

In the Central Industrial Area and in the Volga Area, regional conferences of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies took place late in March which were of great importance in helping to unite the Soviets on an all-Russia scale.

Bolshevik organisations were active in preparing for and organising the first Moscow regional conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Nearly all the items on the agenda had been previously discussed in local Soviets where representatives of the Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) had gone to with the aim of helping the discussion. The main reports of the Conference on the Soviets' attitude towards the war and on the problems of organising and forming Soviets were made by I. I. Skvortsov (Stepanov) and V. P. Nogin.

The Conference resolved to form a 32-man Bureau of the Soviets of the Moscow Region with 16 representatives from soldiers' and 16 from workers' sections. The Regional Bureau was given the task of taking all possible steps to draw the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies into the regional association too. The political parties had equal official representation on the Regional Bureau of Soviets (three representatives each from the Bolsheviks, the Mensheviks and the S.R.s).<sup>4</sup> Most of the seats belonged therefore to the Mensheviks and the S.R.s., and this was why the actions of the Regional Bureau of Soviets often did not correspond with the interests of the working people before the October Revolution.

In March 1917 another regional association of Soviets began to form in the Volga Area around Saratov. On March 23-24 the first Volga Regional Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers'

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384; S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66; P. Kroshitsky and S.S. Sokolov, 1917-1918. *A Record of Revolutionary Events in the Tambov Gubernia*, Tambov, 1927, p. 8 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., Files 683, 66.

Deputies was held in Saratov. There were delegates present not only from the towns of Saratov Gubernia, but also from the Soviets of Zlatoust, Uralsk, Chelyabinsk, Penza, Samara and Orenburg. It was thus rather an impressive forum of the Soviets of the Volga Area and the South Urals. Prominent Bolshevik Party workers and active organisers of the Soviets took part in the conference. Among them were members of the Saratov Soviet M. I. Vasilyev-Yuzhin, V. P. Milyutin, P. A. Lebedev and S. G. Kislyakov (Uralov). The Samara Soviet was represented by S. I. Deryabina, and the Astrakhan Soviet by the Bolshevik worker N. G. Voronkov.<sup>1</sup> Though the conciliators succeeded in getting their resolutions passed, this first Volga Area conference of Soviets had a positive significance in that it introduced a certain amount of co-ordination into the work of the local Soviets.

The rallying together of the Soviets around the big industrial centres was everywhere evident. In early April 1917, the department for the provinces of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies held a meeting with representatives of the Soviets of Petrograd, Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Zhitomir, Smolensk, Mogilyov, Gomel, Irkutsk and Yaroslavl. They discussed the forms of regional associations, the links between the local Soviets and the large central ones, and exchanged experience of the organisational work of the Soviets.<sup>2</sup>

On March 18 the Petrograd Soviet E.C. decided to call a conference of representatives of local Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Not certain how this conference would go, the conciliators wanted to hold it as an unofficial one. They suggested that only delegates from 60 big cities and Army organisations should be invited.<sup>3</sup> This caused justified discontent in local organisations. Many of the delegates attending the Moscow regional conference of Soviets raised objections to the fact that the coming Petrograd conference was announced as an all-Russia meeting but the provinces were essentially to be without representation.<sup>4</sup>

The pressure from below became so strong that the S.R. and Menshevik E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet had to abandon its original plans. About 600 men and women arrived in Petrograd, 470 of them with the right to vote. And instead of the planned 60 cities, 120

<sup>1</sup> A. I. Razgon, "On the Composition of the Soviets of the Lower Volga Area in March-April, 1917" in *The Soviets and the Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry in the October Revolution*, p. 96 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>4</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

cities and towns, including all centres of any appreciable size, sent representatives.<sup>1</sup>

The representation at the conference was so arranged by the conciliators as to ensure a majority for the representatives of the top Army organisations, which fully supported the Mensheviks and S.R.s. The All-Russia Cossack Congress was allotted 11 seats, each separate army eight seats, and every individual army unit a corresponding number of seats. At the same time the Soviets were permitted to send only two delegates each, one from the workers' and one from the soldiers' sections.<sup>2</sup>

The All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was held in Petrograd from March 29 to April 3. The items on the agenda were as follows: the attitude of the Soviets to the Provisional Government and to the war; the preparations for elections to the Constituent Assembly; the organisation of the revolutionary forces and the struggle against counter-revolution; the introduction of the 8-hour working day and questions of the soldiers' and peasants' living conditions; reports from the locations; the establishment of regional associations; and the convocation of the first All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

The Mensheviks made all the reports to the All-Russia Conference—I. G. Tsereteli on the attitude towards the war, Y. M. Steklov on the attitude towards the Provisional Government and B. O. Bogdanov on organisational questions. All speakers were E. C. members.

Tsereteli used his speech to justify the imperialist policies of the Provisional Government and the support that the S.R.-Menshevik majority of the Petrograd Soviet gave it. He highly praised the appeal of the Government "To the Citizens of Russia" that had been published the day before (March 28). He described it as "an outstanding victory for democracy". Resorting to direct deceit the Menshevik leader claimed that by its Appeal the Provisional Government had "solemnly announced its break with the foreign policy of the tsarist government and the imperialist circles of the bourgeoisie".<sup>3</sup> This was deception based on the assumption that the bulk of the workers and soldiers had not yet had time to

<sup>1</sup> 1917. *The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Part 1, p. 272 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Essays on the History of the October Revolution*, Vol. 2, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, p. 149 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The All-Russia Conference of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Stenographic Report*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, pp. 38, 40 (Russ. ed.).

determine the true content of the foreign policy of the Provisional Government.

Tsereteli's report produced a lively debate. Representatives of all the petty-bourgeois parties spoke in support of the "defencist" resolution proposed by the Petrograd Soviet E.C., while the Bolsheviks and a small group of the S.R.s spoke against it. On behalf of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), V. P. Nogin urged the Conference to adopt a resolution exposing the aggressive plans of the bourgeoisie and demanding the speediest possible end to the war and the signing of a just peace treaty.<sup>1</sup>

The Conference accepted as a basis the draft resolution which Tsereteli had proposed. The Bolsheviks however tried to get some amendments of principle included in the resolution. V. P. Nogin pointed out that it was necessary first of all to make a definite and clear-cut statement of the fact that the Conference placed its main hopes for an end to the war and the signing of a peace treaty on the victory of the proletariat and its coming to power; and secondly to demand of the Provisional Government that it cease its secret diplomacy and annul the agreements which had been signed behind the people's back.<sup>2</sup>

Another Bolshevik, N. A. Skrypnik, proposed the inclusion of the following amendment in the resolution on the Conference's attitude towards the war: "The revolutionary people of Russia will continue their efforts to win peace on the basis of equality and fraternity of free nations, and demand from the Provisional Government, as its next step, an open declaration to the whole world that the peoples of liberated Russia are prepared to commence peace talks based on the right of nations to self-determination without either annexations or reparations."

The Conference turned down the Bolsheviks' amendments and adopted the Menshevik resolution. This contained a call "to mobilise all the forces of the country in all the fields of national life in order to strengthen the front and the rear", i.e., to carry on the imperialist war.

The debate on the attitude of "revolutionary democracy" to the Provisional Government took up most of the time of the All-Russia Conference of Soviets. The speaker on the subject, Y. M. Steklov, cited a number of facts which proved beyond doubt that in the first

days of the Revolution the Petrograd Soviet was the only political organisation that was capable of exercising state power, and that it was only the agreement of the Soviet's E. C. with the Provisional Committee of the State Duma that brought about the formation of another "legal" government. Steklov stated further that the Government was no longer taking the Petrograd Soviet seriously into account and that it had therefore become necessary to keep it constantly "under pressure". It was clear that the bourgeois Government was deliberately holding up the advance of the revolution. The task was to end dual power as soon as possible and to concentrate full state power into the hands of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. But the Mensheviks and the S.R.s did not have this in mind. The E. C. of the Petrograd Soviet recommended the All-Russia Conference of Soviets to regard it as reasonable to give further support to the Provisional Government "so long as it remains in agreement with the Soviet [?] and moves steadily in the direction of consolidating the gains of the revolution".<sup>1</sup>

The collusion between the petty-bourgeois parties and the Cadets was confirmed by Tsereteli, who said that the Petrograd Soviet could indeed have taken power if it had wanted to, but that it did not try to do so—because "the revolution was a bourgeois one" (!). Tsereteli justified the agreement of the Petrograd Soviet with the State Duma Committee by claiming that it had resulted in the working out of a platform which could unite the workers, the peasants and those strata of the bourgeoisie which "realise the task facing the country".<sup>2</sup> That is, he preached the reformist theory of "class peace". Using their absolute majority at the Conference, the S.R.s and Mensheviks then passed an opportunist resolution on the attitude of the Conference towards the Provisional Government. This said that the Provisional Government was, on the whole, moving towards the fulfilment of the commitments it had taken upon itself (the true situation was quite the reverse, in fact) and for that reason, the Soviets should render it every support.<sup>3</sup>

The resolutions on the workers' and peasants' working conditions also reflected a desire to placate the bourgeoisie. The Provisional Government was recommended to issue a decree introducing the 8-hour working day but the possibility was admitted for overtime work during the war at armaments factories or those producing the

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, March 29, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, pp. 93-95 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> *The All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, p. 92 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178-79.

necessities of life. The Conference warned the workers not to take "non-organised partial actions for the introduction of the 8-hour day", i.e., it took the side of the owners.<sup>1</sup>

On a further proposal of Tsereteli's the Conference adopted a resolution on the peasant and land questions. The solution of the land question was put off until the Constituent Assembly had been convened. The Provisional Government was only to ban all deals involving the buying, selling or mortgaging of land.

At the time that the All-Russia Conference was held a large number of Soviets and peasants' committees had already been formed in the countryside. The conciliators could not of course entirely ignore these democratic bodies, but they made an attempt to direct their activities into relatively harmless channels, i.e., harmless from the point of view of the landowners. The Conference admitted the need for establishing local land committees "to lower rents, regulate wages, and to settle misunderstandings and disputes between private owners and peasants".<sup>2</sup>

But whereas the owners received rather "respectful treatment" from the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, the agrarian "disturbances"—i.e., the peasants' attempts to settle the land question in a revolutionary manner—were treated without ceremony by the conciliators who did not scruple in choosing the means of "pacification". The uyezd and volost committees were obliged "to fight against all attempts at the arbitrary settlement of the land question".<sup>3</sup>

The All-Russia Conference devoted considerable attention to the organisation and building of Soviets in both the centre and throughout the country. Following Bogdanov's report a resolution was adopted called "The Unification of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Russia". The Conference considered it necessary to set up Soviets in every part of the country and that, as a rule, they should be united Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies with representatives of the working peasantry included wherever possible. The unification of the Soviets on an all-Russia scale was also envisaged. The future Congress of Soviets was to be regarded as the highest Soviet body and the Central Executive Committee (C.E.C.) as its executive organ.

The All-Russia Conference decided to convene the first Congress of Soviets not later than April 25. All the Soviets of Workers' and

Soldiers' Deputies existing in Russia and the Army Committees were to be involved in the work of the Congress. The following rate of representation was established: Soviets elected by between 25,000 and 50,000 people were to send two delegates, 50,000-75,000—three delegates, 75,000-100,000—four delegates, 100,000-150,000—five delegates, 150,000-200,000—six delegates, and over 200,000—eight delegates. Soviets representing less than 25,000 people were to unite with others and to send delegates according to the general rate.

In order to unite the Soviets throughout the country and to establish permanent contacts between them, the All-Russia Conference recommended the calling of regional congresses of Soviets and the election of regional executive committees. The delegates to such congresses were to be elected from all the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in a given region. It was suggested that the regional associations of Soviets include representatives of the organised working peasants.<sup>1</sup>

Following the reports of delegates from the Army the All-Russia Conference passed a resolution on the reorganisation of the Army along democratic lines and approved basic regulations for the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies and for the company, regimental and other soldiers' committees. The Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies in the rear and the soldiers' committees in active service, together with the congresses and conferences of the fronts, armies and corps (and the executive committees elected by them) were recognised as the "highest organs expressing the will of the mass of the soldiers". The soldiers' committees were advised to maintain close bonds of unity with the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>2</sup>

It will be seen that on all the main issues (the attitude to the Provisional Government, the war, the 8-hour day, the land question) the All-Russia Conference of Soviets adopted conciliatory resolutions. The petty-bourgeois line of the S.R. and Menshevik leadership of the Petrograd Soviet was approved and became official policy. Nevertheless the All-Russia Conference had a definite positive significance. It laid the foundations for the unification of the Soviets not only on a regional but on an all-Russia scale.

There has been preserved in the files of the department for the provinces of the Petrograd Soviet an instruction on the procedure that was to be followed in calling regional congresses of Soviets and

<sup>1</sup> *The All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 311-12 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 271-75.

setting up regional associations of Soviets. This document seems to have been approved by the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet and sent to all parts of the country, since the congresses of Soviets held in April and May throughout the country were guided by its main provisions. The explanatory note attached to it gave the following reason for the setting up of regional and district associations of Soviets: "The vast expanses of the country and the differences in its social and economic conditions make it necessary to set up regional and district associations. The all-Russia organisation cannot remain strong for long without such intermediate bodies to link the centre with the basic cells of the organisation, the local Soviets."<sup>1</sup>

The notification of the department of the provinces of the Petrograd Soviet sent to all gubernia city Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies said: "The All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies deemed it necessary to set up regional organisations throughout Russia. The first step in this direction must be the convening in the near future of regional congresses.... The Executive Committee appeals to your Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to begin this work if some special body has not yet been formed for the purpose.

"In accordance with the decisions of the All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies the Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee established the following regions:

"1. The Northern region: Petrograd Gubernia (excluding Petrograd), and the Novgorod, Olonets and Vologda gubernias with Vologda as its centre.

"2. The Volga region: Nizhni-Novgorod, Kazan, Simbirsk, Saratov, Samara, Penza, Astrakhan and Orenburg gubernias (with the exception of Chelyabinsk and Troitsk), with Saratov as its centre.

"3. The Western region: Smolensk, Minsk, Vitebsk, Mogilyov, Vilna and Pskov gubernias, with Vitebsk as its centre.

"4. The Baltic gubernias: Estland, Lifland and Kurland, with Revel as its centre.

"5. The Donets region: Yekaterinoslav Gubernia, the Don Cossack Region and Krivoi Rog, with Kharkov as its centre.

"6. The Southern region: the Poltava, Kursk, Voronezh, Chernigov and Kiev gubernias, and Kupyansk Uyezd in Kharkov Gubernia, with Kiev as its centre.

"7. The Second Southern region: Volhynia, Podolia, Bessarabia,

Kherson and Novorossiisk gubernias and part of Tavrida Gubernia, with Odessa as its centre.

"8. The Moscow region: Moscow, Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Vladimir, Tula, Kaluga, Ryazan, Tver, Orel and Tambov gubernias with Moscow as its centre.

"9. The Urals: Perm, Vyatka and Ufa gubernias, Chelyabinsk and Troitsk (Orenburg Gubernia), with Perm as its centre.

"10. The Caucasus: All the gubernias of the Northern and Southern Caucasus and the Transcaucasus, with Tiflis as its centre.

"11. Turkestan: Ferghana, Samarkand, Semirechye, Syr-Darya, and Transcaspian regions, with Tashkent as its centre.

"12. Siberia: Irkutsk Gubernia, Chita, Verkhneudinsk, Vladivostok and the Amur region, with Irkutsk as its centre.

"13. Siberia: Semipalatinsk Region, Tomsk and Yeniseisk gubernias, and the Altai Area, with Omsk as its centre."<sup>1</sup>

In the main the regional associations of Soviets proved to be viable forms of Soviet organisation. They remained in existence until some time after the October Socialist Revolution.

The setting up of the regional associations of Soviets was a protracted process which continued into the autumn of 1917. But in most areas congresses or conferences of Soviets were held in April or May.

The East Siberian Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies held their first congress at Irkutsk from April 7 to 13. In the resolutions which it adopted on the main points of its agenda the congress endorsed the corresponding resolutions of the All-Russia Conference of Soviets.

The Urals Soviets first came together at a regional congress held in Perm from May 7 to May 14. There were more than 200 delegates present from the Soviets of Perm, Vyatka, Ufa and Orenburg gubernias. They devoted much attention to the building of Soviets and considered it advisable to create four district associations in the Urals, alongside the regional association, with centres in Yekaterinburg, Vyatka, Perm and Ufa.

Representatives of the Kuban region held their congress in Yekaterinodar from April 9 to April 19. They elected a Regional Soviet and an executive committee and resolved to form Soviets of Cossack's Deputies in all Cossack settlements.

The Soviets of the Moscow region, the Northern region (Vologda),

<sup>1</sup> C.S.A.O.R., U.S.S.R., File 6978.

<sup>1</sup> *The Organisation and Building of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, pp. 169-71 (Russ. ed.).

the Volga region, the Far East, the Caucasus, the Don Cossack region, the South-West region (Kiev), the Donets-Krivoi Rog Basin (Kharkov), the Second Southern region (Odessa), the Western region (Minsk) and Turkestan (Tashkent) held regional congresses in May 1917.

As a general rule, the regional congresses of workers' and soldiers' deputies had Menshevik and S.R. majorities and endorsed the decisions of the All-Russia Conference, and the executive bodies elected by them were petty-bourgeois in composition. However they did good work for all that by promoting the unification of the Soviets throughout Russia.

CHAPTER THREE

# THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES DURING THE PERIOD OF DUAL POWER



FOR THE CONSTITUTION OF THE RUSSIAN  
SOCIALIST FEDERATIVE SOVIET REPUBLIC  
FOR THE WORKERS,  
THE SOLDIERS  
AND PEASANTS  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

★

## 1. THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SOVIETS AND THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE LOCAL ORGANS OF BOURGEOIS RULE IN THE COUNTRY

The recognition of the Provisional Government by the Petrograd Soviet predetermined the attitude of local Soviets throughout the country to the government. The Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Nizhni-Novgorod, Kostroma, Saratov, Yekaterinburg, Helsingfors, Omsk and other Soviets, and the Moscow and Volga Area regional conferences of Soviets and later the All-Russia Conference of Soviets in March 1917 decided on conditional support for the Provisional Government.

Having thus been assured of the support of the Soviets in the capital and in other places, the Provisional Government then began to create organs of state power. In doing so the bourgeoisie did not of course set itself the task of breaking up the old military and bureaucratic machinery and replacing the tsar's state apparatus by a democratic one; it only attempted to reform it somewhat in order to adjust it to the new conditions.

First of all the Provisional Government decided to do away with the posts of Governors and Vice-Governors. Their duties were usually handed on to the former chairmen of the Zemstvo boards, who were now renamed Commissars of the Provisional Government. Under the tsar, the Zemstvo boards had been mostly headed by big landowners or their protégés. The fact that they were now called Commissars of the Provisional Government only served to emphasise the fact that the new bourgeois rule was the direct successor of tsarism. But even this reform seemed too radical for many among the bourgeoisie, and the Cadet-Octobrist Ministers tried to guarantee "the preservation, within the bounds of the possible, of the whole of the existing administrative apparatus".<sup>1</sup> The Provisional Govern-

<sup>1</sup> *Register of the Provisional Government's Proceedings*, March 4, 1917 (Russ. ed.).

ment firmly adhered to this line in its subsequent decisions and directives. The Zemstvo boards, and the city and district Dumas were retained in the gubernia and uyezd towns. Later they were only partly democratised to allow some representation of workers and petty-bourgeois strata on them.

On April 21 the Government issued a "Decree on Land Committees", presented by the Minister of Agriculture, A. I. Shingaryov. This envisaged the formation of a Central Land Committee in the capital with land committees in the gubernias, uyezds and volosts. Most seats on the land committees were given to members of the bourgeois-landowner Zemstvos.

The reform of the key section of the state apparatus was thus carried out by bureaucratic means in the interests of the landowners. Lenin described Shingaryov's "Decree on Land Committees" as a "swindling landowners' law".<sup>1</sup> With the help of these rigged land committees the Provisional Government hoped to do away with agricultural "disturbances" and to preserve landownership.

Steps were taken to retain key positions in city and town administrations in the hands of the bourgeoisie. As soon as the news of the tsar's overthrow had been received in every town, "provisional executive committees", "committees of public safety", "committees of public organisations" and suchlike bourgeois-democratic bodies were hurriedly formed. The State Duma Committee, and later on the Provisional Government, regarded these self-appointed bourgeois bodies as "legal" and the gubernia and uyezd Commissars of the Provisional Government were instructed by the Ministry of Home Affairs to work in conjunction with them.

The Cadets and the Octobrists tried to present these bourgeois committees as supra-class bodies expressing the interests of the "entire population". In fact, they were largely organs of democracy for the propertied classes. The Moscow Committee of Public Organisations was formed on February 28. It included members of the City Duma and Zemstvo Board, the War-Industries Committee, Stock Exchange bodies, trade unions, co-operatives, hospital savings clubs, and so on. There were 170 people at its first meeting, representing 23 organisations. Later the Committee acquired new members and grew in number to 500 by the middle of May.<sup>2</sup>

The members of the Moscow Committee of Public Organisation were divided into different "curias" or sections: those from organi-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> *Documents of the Committee of Moscow Public Organisations*, Issue 1, Moscow, 1917, pp. 3-14 (Russ. ed.).

sations of propertied persons, workers' organisations, democratic bodies, military representatives. Later an independent peasants' section was formed. On March 1 the Committee of Public Organisations announced to the population of Moscow that it had taken over control of the city and that "all institutions and private persons must carry out the Committee's decisions and orders".<sup>1</sup>

Organs of bourgeois self-government were formed in a similar way in other cities and areas. In Ivanovo-Voznesensk, on March 3, a so-called Revolutionary Committee of Public Safety was formed consisting of representatives of the bourgeois parties and of the Mensheviks and S.R.s. The City Duma, the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, local troops, co-operatives and other bodies agreed to send representatives — 15 from the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 10 from the City Duma, five from the hospital savings clubs,<sup>2</sup> five from the command of the 199th Reserve Regiment, 17 from the soldiers, two from the Society of Factory Owners, four from the teachers' union, etc., 61 people in all.<sup>3</sup>

The overwhelming majority of the Vladimir Gubernia "Committee of Order" consisted of men representing landlords and factory owners. It numbered 110, but had only six people from the Vladimir Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, three from the co-operatives and none at all from the workers.<sup>4</sup>

Elections to the gubernia and uyezd "committees of order" were multi-staged and therefore indirect. The system of landlord and bourgeois rule in the localities was thus made up of a gubernia (or uyezd) commissar of the Provisional Government, the Zemstvo boards, and the land and the food committees. Alongside them were the self-initiated gubernia (or uyezd or volost) executive committees, or the committees of public organisations and "committees of order".

The election throughout the country in March-April 1917 of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and of peasants', soldiers', sailors' and other committees, on the one hand, and the appearance of the bourgeois "committees of order", on the other, reflected the formation of dual power in the country.

Confused by the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, most workers and

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the History of the October Revolution in Moscow*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, p. 161 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> In keeping with a law passed in 1912, hospital savings clubs were established in Russia at factories and mills under the direct control of their owners.

<sup>3</sup> *1917 in the Ivanovo-Voznesensk District (Record of Events)*, pp. 18-20; *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia After the Overthrow of Tsarism*, pp. 198-99 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

soldiers supposed at first that the "committees of order" were to represent the interests of the whole of "revolutionary democracy". That is why they struggled to extend their representation on them. The workers of Nizhni-Novgorod originally had 12 seats on the City Executive Committee. They later increased this first to 24 and then to 37.<sup>1</sup> The Syzran Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies protested against the local "committee of order" having been formed without even bothering to observe the democratic procedure of electing members. The Soviet decided to regard the "committee of order" as incompetent to settle issues of basic importance such as the election of a Commissar until it had been re-formed by secret ballot on the basis of direct, equal and universal suffrage.<sup>2</sup>

The local Soviets were uncertain of what relations they should enter into with the organs of bourgeois rule and they raised this question directly with the Petrograd, Moscow and other leading Soviets. In late March 1917 the Petrograd Soviet worked out a directive for all Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The preamble to this said that a great number of queries had been sent in from all over Russia as to how the provincial organs of revolutionary democracy (the Soviets) were to act in the prevailing complicated and decisive situation. Summing up the instructions contained in various previous appeals and decisions, the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet advised the Soviets to be guided in their relations with the Provisional Government and its local bodies by the following rules:

1. The Provisional Government was to be considered the only legal Government for the whole of Russia. All its decisions must be carried out except when the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet had raised objections to them, and the Government's commissars were to be recognised as legal authorities.

2. Throughout the country the Soviets were obliged to co-ordinate their activities with other local public bodies which had recognised the new system, as well as with Government institutions. On all matters relating to general community affairs, such as food supplies, the militia, public security, elections to provisional organs of local self-government, etc., they were to act jointly with other organisations and the Government's commissars, and on no account to take over the functions of the Government.

3. The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, as the organs

of revolutionary democracy, were the means through which revolutionary control of the Government was to be exercised. Whenever Soviets found the actions of local commissars dangerous for the cause of the revolution, they should telegraph the Government and the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Mensheviks and the S.R.s endeavoured to subordinate the Soviets to the Provisional Government. In some local Soviets they were able to follow the instructions of the centre without any obstacles, and where that was impossible they resorted to class collaboration with local organs of bourgeois rule.

The Bolshevik Party determined its attitude towards the organs of local government in accordance with Lenin's theory of the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one. In 1906, during the preparations for the Fourth (Unity) Party Congress, a draft resolution "The Provisional Revolutionary Government and Local Organs of Revolutionary power" was worked out. This said that one of the vital conditions for the success of the future revolutionary Government would be the "setting up of organs of local revolutionary self-government based on universal, equal, direct and secret ballot in all the cities and communities which had joined the uprising".<sup>2</sup>

The February Revolution had transferred the question of the organisation of revolutionary-democratic self-government from the realm of theory to that of practice. The lines along which this question was to be solved were indicated by Lenin at the first Petrograd All-City Conference of Bolsheviks on April 14, 1917. He said: "The whole of Russia is already being covered with a network of organs of local self-government. A commune may exist also in the form of organs of self-government."<sup>3</sup> Lenin developed his views further on this point in his article "Materials on the Revision of the Party Programme" (May 1917). He pointed out in this that with the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the socialist revolution "parliamentary representative institutions will be gradually replaced by Soviets of people's representatives (from various classes and professions, or from various localities)".<sup>4</sup> Soviet power would open up wide fields of activity for such bodies, for instance in education, in the fight against unemployment, and so on.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1917-1920. *A Record of Revolutionary Events in the Gorky Area*, Gorky, 1932, p. 13 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> C.P.S.U. in Resolutions, Part 1, p. 110 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Vol. 24, p. 461.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 471-73.

Therefore the Bolshevik Party considered the main task not to be that of increasing the workers' representatives and those of the working people in general in the "committees of order" (though this was not ruled out), but of rallying the revolutionary classes around the Soviets in the struggle to make the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies the only organs of state power with full rights.

However, in the first weeks of the Revolution when dual power was in the process of formation not all Bolshevik organisations pursued correct tactics in relation to the bourgeois organs of local government. The Bolsheviks joined the "committees of order" in Moscow, Saratov, Samara, Krasnoyarsk and other cities because they wrongly assessed the class nature of these organisations, thinking them to be "generally democratic" bodies capable of taking revolutionary action. This was particularly true of Moscow. The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies recognised the Moscow "committee of order" as a legal authority from the beginning and enforced its own decisions with the aid of this purely bourgeois body. And Bolshevik deputies to the Soviet also took a conciliatory stand on the committee. True, at the second meeting of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies P. G. Smidovich said that "the new power [i.e., 'the committee of public organisations']—A. A.] which has replaced the old one is not connected with the mass of the people and, evidently, does not want to be connected with it."<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless he and V. P. Nogin sat on this committee and held responsible posts. They were, therefore, helping to sow illusions among the workers that the new "committee", bourgeois through and through, was capable of following the programme that had been outlined by the Soviet. The incorrect line taken by Smidovich, Nogin and other workers of the Moscow Party organisation was criticised at the 7th (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.).<sup>2</sup>

Since they were governed by the directives of the Provisional Government concerning the need to preserve the unity of "Russian statehood", i.e., the apparatus of violence and oppression, the "committees of order" prevented the Soviets from abolishing the most hated of the tsarist trappings—the police, the security forces, and the rest. This led to sharp conflicts between the revolutionary masses and the local organs of bourgeois power. The Krasnoyarsk Soviet of the Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies suggested on March 3 that the

<sup>1</sup> Y. Ignatov, *The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, p. 11 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, p. 142 (Russ. ed.).

"committee of order" should immediately arrest Governor Gololobov, well-known all over Siberia for his atrocities, and all the gendarmes and police in the city. When the Soviet met with the committee's refusal it authorised its own Presidium to arrest the Governor. Five armed detachments were formed headed by the Soviet's deputies, and together with the soldiers of the 4th Company of the 15th Infantry Regiment (commanded by S. G. Lazo) they arrested the servants of the old regime and sent them to jail.<sup>1</sup>

The balance of class forces which emerged in the course of the revolution determined the energy and persistence or, on the contrary, the passivity and conciliatory character of local Soviets in their relations with the "committees of order".

In the city of Nikolayev the Soviet of Workers' Deputies was organised before the bourgeois committee appeared and took charge of all aspects of local life. It disarmed the police, set up public bakeries, fixed the prices of priority items of food that were in short supply, and in general acted as an organ of revolutionary power with full rights.<sup>2</sup> Similar situations existed in Grozny and in Vladivostok. The Grozny Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies administered the whole of the city's economy, and together with the district Soviets appointed commissars and set up various commissions and a workers' militia.<sup>3</sup>

The Vladivostok "committee of public security" was the most reactionary of all the Provisional Government bodies in the Far East. It banned the taking of any steps in the city which could "undermine the foundations" of the old police-dominated administrative apparatus. The Bolsheviks demanded the abolition of the committee as a threat to the revolution and the S.R.-Menshevik majority of the Vladivostok Soviet was compelled to dissolve it and to hold fresh elections. The new committee that was set up was only an intermediate link between the Provisional Government and the Soviet and real power was vested in the Vladivostok Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the false assurances of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s that the Provisional Government was "conscientiously fulfilling the terms

<sup>1</sup> C.P.A., I.M.L. (Central Party Archives at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism), File 70; *The Krasnoyarsk Soviet (March 1917-June 1918)*, pp. 10-11 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Essays on the History of the October Revolution*, Vol. 2, pp. 127, 210 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Organisation and Building of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, pp. 336-37 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> L. Belikova, *The Struggle of the Bolsheviks to Establish and Strengthen Soviet Power in Primorye*, pp. 33-34 (Russ. ed.).

of the agreement with the Petrograd Soviet", the advanced and most class-conscious section of the workers were aware that it was only the unity of the revolutionary people, rallied around the Soviets, that could create the conditions for the further advance of the revolution—and not the much advertised "control" of the bourgeois Government by the Soviets. The mandates given by the Soviets to their delegates to the First Moscow Regional Conference of Soviets and the speeches made at the Conference are both significant in this respect. The Kimry Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Tver Gubernia) mandated their delegates to declare that "the Provisional Government does not express the will of the working class and peasantry and does not defend their interests. Pending the convocation of a Constituent Assembly the will of the people can manifest itself only in the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies and to reveal the will of the people it is necessary to call all-Russia conferences of Soviets".<sup>1</sup> The representative of the Nizhni-Novgorod Soviet said that the Sormovo workers (Sormovo was one of the districts of Nizhni-Novgorod) well understood the relationship between the Soviets and the Provisional Government: "The Provisional Government marches in front, with the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies behind, bayonets in hand, constantly correcting the direction taken by the Government. The moment the Government deviates to the right they use their bayonets to shift it to the left."<sup>2</sup>

The review of the domestic situation in Russia for the period March to May 1917, made by the extra-metropolitan department of the State Duma Provisional Committee noted that "The Soviets are rapidly growing more popular throughout the country, and their authority is absolute among soldiers and workers".<sup>3</sup>

The gubernia commissars of Central Russia held a meeting in Petrograd on April 22-24 at which it was admitted that the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies were playing an ever increasing role in the life of the country in their endeavours to solve the most urgent problems independently. One speaker even said, "One should not forget that without the active support of public and trade organisations and of the Soviets of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' groups, the governing power of the commissars would be reduced to nil."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Red Archives, 1926, Vol. 2 (65), pp. 38-40 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. I, p. 546 (Russ. ed.).

As the anti-popular character of the Provisional Government's policies became more obvious, the conflict between the Soviets and the central and local organs of bourgeois rule became more sharp. Many Soviets refused to follow the instructions of the S.R. and Menshevik E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet, preferring to act in a more resolute and revolutionary way.

In May the Terek "committee of order" decided to restrict the freedom of assembly in the North Caucasus. But the Vladikavkaz Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies intervened after hearing a speech by the prominent Bolshevik Party worker S. M. Kirov, and expressed its complete opposition to the decision of the bourgeois committee, declaring that it would not regard it as binding.<sup>1</sup> As a result the Vladikavkaz Soviet greatly increased its authority among the local population.

A fierce struggle took place between the Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies and the Provisional Government commissar in Revel. There were to be elections to the Zemstvo councils, which were to function as consultative bodies attached to the gubernia commissar, but the electoral regulations stipulated a residential qualification and other restrictions which excluded a large number of workers and peasants from taking part in organs of self-government. This of course produced a great deal of discontent. A meeting of Party committees of the North Baltic R.S.D.L.P.(B.) organisation demanded that the date of the elections to the Zemstvo councils be transferred from May 29 to July 25, so as to allow time to revise the electoral regulations. The Revel Soviet also took a similar decision. But the Provisional Government commissar of the Estland Gubernia ignored the Soviet's decision and in fact brought the vote forward to May 23. The Bolshevik faction of the Revel Soviet then proposed that the commissar be removed from his post and it was decided to transfer all civil affairs to the Soviet's Executive Committee.

This revolutionary action aroused the fury of the bourgeoisie and of the leaders of the Petrograd Soviet. The Provisional Government declared the actions of the Revel Soviet to be "illegal and criminal". Representatives of the Provisional Government and of the Petrograd Soviet (led by E.C. member N. D. Sokolov) went to Revel, and, supported by the S.R.s and Mensheviks in Revel, they succeeded in reversing the decision.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Struggle for Soviet Power in North Ossetia, 1917-1920. Collection of Documents*, Orjonikidze, 1957, p. 16 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in May-June 1917. The June Demonstration (Documents and Materials)*, Moscow, 1959, p. 170 (Russ. ed.).

There were many other cases of resolute action on the part of the Soviets against the Provisional Government and its local organs. The revolutionary masses acted against the bureaucratic practice of "appointing chiefs" and tried to ensure the observance of the principles of democracy when local organs of power were being established. The workers of Kostroma did not accept the Provisional Government commissar appointed to rule them but instead formed a "collective commissariat" of their own consisting of three deputies of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.<sup>1</sup> Again, a general meeting of delegates from the volosts and factories of Shlisselburg Uyezd (Petrograd Gubernia) decided to set up an uyezd revolutionary committee and to transfer all executive authority to it. The meeting further ruled that the uyezd commissar "must be the executor of the will of the people's revolutionary committee".<sup>2</sup>

The Ministry of Home Affairs then removed the popularly elected commissar of Shlisselburg Uyezd, P. Sytenko, from his post. This evoked the indignation of the workers and on April 26 the Shlisselburg Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, led by Bolshevik N. M. Chekalov, passed a resolution of protest at the Provisional Government's encroachments on the rights of the people which stated that the "commissar is a person who has been elected by the whole of the uyezd" and demanded that the decision to remove Sytenko be cancelled. The resolution also declared that the Soviet "would oppose any future appointments, no matter from where they come, by all available means".<sup>3</sup>

A real "civil war" between the local organs of revolutionary power and the Provisional Government commissars took place in West Siberia, where the Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk and other Soviets enjoyed great authority among the population.

In late April 1917 the Petrograd and Krasnoyarsk Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies received the following telegram from Yeniseisk: "The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has learned of Minister Lvov's cable to Krutovsky appointing him commissar of the Yeniseisk Gubernia. We protest against this plan to introduce government officials again and declare that:

- "1) we shall not let an appointed official govern us;
- "2) there will be no return to rulers over the peasants now that they have been driven out;

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in April 1917. The April Crisis*, pp. 206-07 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 230-34.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 272-73.

"3) we recognise only the organs set up by the people themselves in Yeniseisk Uyezd;

"4) appointed officials will be able to rule us only over our dead bodies."<sup>1</sup>

This telegram was quoted to the delegates at the 7th (April) All-Russia R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Conference,<sup>2</sup> and on April 28 *Pravda* printed Lenin's article "What the Counter-Revolutionary Steps of the Provisional Government Lead To". Lenin explained that the policy of continuing to use autocratic methods of ruling the country was, objectively, a step towards the restoration of the monarchy. "The behaviour of the Provisional Government," Lenin wrote, "has brought this remote uyezd in Siberia, as represented by its popularly elected governing body, to a point when a direct threat of *armed resistance* is made against the Provisional Government. The Provisional Government bosses have certainly asked for it!"<sup>3</sup> And, "What the people need is a really democratic, workers' and peasants' republic, whose authorities have been elected by the people and are displaceable by the people any time they may wish it. And it is for *such* a republic that the workers and peasants should fight, resisting all attempts of the Provisional Government to restore the monarchist, tsarist methods and machinery of government."<sup>4</sup>

The justified actions of the Yeniseisk Soviet received the full support of the Krasnoyarsk, Kansk, Minusinsk and other Soviets. Unable to make the Soviets of the Yeniseisk Gubernia recognise his authority Commissar Krutovsky (an S.R. Party member) resorted to slander. He sent a cable to Prime Minister Lvov alleging that the Krasnoyarsk Soviet had declared itself autonomous, had refused to recognise either the Provisional Government or the Petrograd Soviet, and was planning to arrest him.<sup>5</sup> Krutovsky's complaint was conveyed to the Petrograd Soviet E.C. which in turn requested the opinion of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet on it. The Chairman of the Krasnoyarsk Soviet Y. F. Dubrovinsky replied on April 30: "Since we regard the Government's activities as counter-revolutionary we feel that it is necessary to fight against it and its local organs. Both the non-recognition of your [Petrograd—A. A.] Soviet and Krutovsky's arrest are fantasies, i.e., the fruits of Krutovsky's frightened imagina-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, p. 182 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 321.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>5</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in April 1917. The April Crisis*, pp. 282-83 (Russ. ed.).

tion. We are constantly calling for the close rallying of democracy around the local and central Soviets."<sup>1</sup>

The Soviets' counteractions to the Provisional Government's police measures and their striving to defend their legal rights produced an unbridled campaign of lies and slanders on the part of the bourgeoisie and its vile press. They displayed particular venom in their attacks on the Tsaritsyn and Kronstadt Soviets.

In early May 1917 Kerensky (who was now Minister of War) ordered the withdrawal from Tsaritsyn of the revolutionary 141st and 155th Infantry Reserve Regiments. But the soldiers of the Tsaritsyn garrison, backed by the workers, refused to do so. The bourgeois press then began a concerted campaign against Tsaritsyn. The pages of *Rech* (Speech), *Birzheviye Vedomosti* (The Stock Exchange News), *Yedinstvo* (Unity) and other newspapers described the horrors that were supposed to be taking place in the city. The Tsaritsyn Soviet was charged with seeking "secession" from Russia and establishing "an autonomous republic" outside it. The workers and soldiers of Tsaritsyn, angered by these attacks on the Tsaritsyn Soviet and on the Bolsheviks, called mass meetings in the city which adopted resolutions of protest against the Provisional Government's provocative attitude and its attempts to dissolve the revolutionary regiments.<sup>2</sup>

The Petrograd Soviet cabled the Saratov Soviet suggesting that it send a commission to Tsaritsyn to find out what the real situation was on the spot. The commission made a detailed investigation of the state of affairs in the Tsaritsyn garrison and of the activities of the Soviet and "the committee of public security" and other organisations. This was followed by an "Appeal of the Tsaritsyn Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and Other Political Organisations of the City of Tsaritsyn 'To the Democracy of Russia' Concerning the Slanders Spread by the Bourgeois Press about Revolutionary Tsaritsyn", printed in the Saratov Soviet *Izvestia*.

The Appeal stated that "neither formally, nor in fact, has the Soviet set up any independent Tsaritsyn Republic, and the 'news' of this is pernicious fantasy". The members of the commission which came from Saratov saw that the Tsaritsyn Soviet had been energetic in establishing revolutionary order in the city.

In conclusion the Appeal declared that "the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies stands on guard to protect revolutionary

democracy in Tsaritsyn and marches in step with revolutionary democracy throughout Russia".

The struggle between the Kronstadt Soviet and the Provisional Government assumed a sharp character, too. From the very beginning of the Revolution the Soviet had been the only centre of authority in Kronstadt. The Provisional Government commissar (the Cadet V. N. Pepelayev) had only formal power. On May 13 the Executive Committee of the Kronstadt Soviet decided to abolish the post of Provisional Government Commissar. Its decision said: "The only authority in Kronstadt is the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which directly contacts the Provisional Government on all affairs of state."<sup>1</sup> By this decision the E.C. also cancelled the Provisional Government's right to appoint officials to Kronstadt and provided that henceforth all the administrative posts in the town were open only to members of the Soviet according to the recommendations of the different party factions in the Soviet, which were held responsible for their nominees.

This principled and responsible decision of the Executive Committee was placed before a general meeting of the members of the Kronstadt Soviet on May 16, which, after discussing it, adopted (by a majority of 211 to 41 with one abstention) the following wording: "The only authority in Kronstadt is the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which gets into direct touch with the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on all matters relating to the state...."<sup>2</sup> The Kronstadt Soviet thus now openly declared that it considered the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies the only supreme power in the country. The reservation about "consulting" the Provisional Government contained in the E.C.'s original wording was excluded.

The events in Kronstadt greatly upset the Provisional Government and the S.R.-Menshevik majority of the Petrograd Soviet. The bourgeois and petty-bourgeois press busily began to spread rumours about anarchy in Kronstadt and about the declaration of a Kronstadt Republic that was to have no more than "federative links" with the rest of Russia. This was aimed at turning public opinion against revolutionary Kronstadt, doing away with the Kronstadt Soviet and imposing the undivided rule of the bourgeoisie.

The leaders of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s tried to persuade the Kronstadt Soviet to give up its revolutionary stand. The E.C. of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in April 1917. The April Crisis*, pp. 282-83 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *1917 in Tsaritsyn*, Collection of Documents and Materials, Stalingrad, 1957, pp. 29-30 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> *The Petrograd Bolsheviks in 1917. The Record of the Revolutionary Events in Petrograd. March-October 1917*, Leningrad, 1957, p. 205 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209-10.

Petrograd Soviet discussed the question of "the Kronstadt events" on May 19. It was decided to send a delegation to Kronstadt consisting of Chkhheidze, Gots, Leber and Anisimov. They first met the E.C. of the Kronstadt Soviet and then (on May 21) the full Soviet. Confronted now with their leaders, the S.R.s of Kronstadt, who had voted under the pressure of the people of Kronstadt for the May 16th resolution, did not "dare" to defend it. This had to be done by the Bolsheviks alone.

The leaders of the Bolshevik faction, A. M. Lyubovich, F. F. Raskolnikov, S. G. Roshal and others, followed the instructions of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Central Committee and Lenin's personal advice in this difficult situation. F. F. Raskolnikov writes in his memoirs that Lenin had recommended them not to retreat from the position they had gained but to knock the trump card out of the bourgeoisie's hand—by exposing the stories about "the secession of Kronstadt from Russia". "To declare Soviet power in Kronstadt alone, separately from the whole of Russia, would be utopian, an obvious absurdity," Lenin declared.<sup>1</sup>

After their talks with the Petrograd delegation the Kronstadt Soviet E. C. published a "Note of Clarification" on its May 16 resolution. This reiterated that the Soviet had always been the sole authority in Kronstadt since the outbreak of the Revolution, while the Provisional Government commissar had never had any part to play, and that the May 16 resolution had therefore only legalised a situation that had existed in the city for over the two months. The Kronstadt Soviet would, as before, get into direct contact with the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on any affairs of state importance. But it went on to say that the Kronstadt Soviet had agreed to recognise the Provisional Government until "an all-Russia Central Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies finds it necessary to take government power into its hands".<sup>2</sup> This decision of the Kronstadt Soviet corresponded with the Bolshevik Party line of developing the Revolution by peaceful means.

On its return from Kronstadt the delegation of the Petrograd Soviet reported on the results of its investigations into the conflict at Kronstadt. The speaker, the Menshevik Anisimov, was compelled to admit that the people of Kronstadt "had not declared an independent republic and did not refuse to recognise the Provisional

<sup>1</sup> F. F. Raskolnikov, *Kronstadt and Petersburg in 1917*, Moscow, 1925, p. 70 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. F. Shishkin, "The Kronstadt Affair of May 1917", *Scientific Proceedings of the Herzen Teachers' Training College in Leningrad*, Vol. 152, pp. 14-16 (Russ. ed.).

Government until a Central Soviet had taken power". But they did not trust the coalition Government and regarded their Soviet as the only power in Kronstadt. Anisimov said: "We kept telling them that the Soviet was not a government, but they replied that they wanted to set us an example [of taking power].—A. A.), seeing our own irresoluteness."<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviks Lyubovich, Roshal and Raskolnikov spoke at the Petrograd Soviet meeting in support of the political line and practical work of the Kronstadt Soviet, while exposing the demagogic of those conciliators who tried to present the revolutionary sailors as splitters who were "undermining the unity of democracy". The Kronstadt Bolsheviks declared that they "agreed to follow the Petrograd Soviet's line, but to keep their eyes left rather than right".<sup>2</sup>

On May 26, in order to please the bourgeois Provisional Government, the Menshevik and S.R. leaders of the Petrograd Soviet had a resolution passed in which, in solidarity with the yellow press, the Kronstadt Soviet's actions were qualified as "a break away from Russia", "a blow to the revolution" and the like. And to make the impact of the resolution as great as possible it was cabled to all Kronstadt forts, the fortress' and ships' crews of the Baltic Fleet and to all Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>3</sup>

This "curse" of the Mensheviks and S.R.s on the Kronstadt Soviet had little effect on it, however. On the next day (May 27) it appealed to the people of Petrograd and of the whole of Russia to put an end to the baiting of revolutionary Kronstadt. The appeal stated that contrary to the allegations of the bourgeois press a firm revolutionary order had been established in the town, and declared that the Provisional Government would not and could not at any time become the true vehicle of the will of democracy. The Petrograd Soviet and the other Soviets were making a big mistake by supporting the Government.<sup>4</sup>

The drive of the Provisional Government and the bourgeois press against Kronstadt evoked the warm sympathy of working people all over Russia. The Soviets of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Alexandrov, Helsingfors and Cheboksary, the workers and soldiers of Voronezh, Krasnoyarsk, Vyborg, and the sailors of Revel, Abo and other Baltic Fleet bases made declarations of support for the Kronstadt Soviet.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 1000.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, May 24, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., May 26, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Pravda*, May 31, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> 1917 in the Ivanovo-Voznesensk District, p. 121; *The Struggle for Soviet Power in the Voronezh Gubernia, 1917-1918*, Collection of Documents and

And going beyond expressions of solidarity alone the workers of many cities and soldiers on active service sent delegations to Kronstadt with instructions to "see everything for themselves". Delegates went to see factories and workshops, the forts, barracks and ships, and talked to sailors, soldiers and workers, and then shared their impressions.

On June 24 Kronstadt was visited by a group of delegates from the All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Organisations of the Front and the Rear. On behalf of the Conference the delegates delivered a message of greetings to the Kronstadt sailors at a meeting in Yakornaya (Anchor) Square. This said: "Revolutionary Kronstadt is the one corner of Russia where revolutionary democracy reigns supreme."<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Provisional Government and its local organs of power in the period March-June 1917 reflected the temporary, unstable character of state power at this time. There was a constant struggle between the main antagonistic classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, a struggle now covert and now overt and fierce.

## 2. THE BOLSHEVIK ORGANISATIONS AND THE SOVIETS IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE REVOLUTION

The February Revolution brought radical changes in the positions of the main political parties of Russia. The bourgeois Cadet and Octobrist parties became the ruling parties in the Provisional Government. The parties of the urban and rural petty-bourgeoisie—the Mensheviks and the S.R.s—made up the majority in the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, and they entered into an alliance with the Cadets. The Bolshevik Party was the only political force that retained its independence and had the status of a left opposition to the Provisional Government, even though it was in the minority in the Soviets.

The complicated situation in which the Party found itself was aggravated by the fact that its leader was still in emigration. Lenin's contacts with the Central Committee members who were in Russia

Materials, Voronezh, 1957, p. 57; *The Baltic Sailors in Preparing for and Carrying Through the Great October Socialist Revolution*, pp. 108-10; S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>1</sup> *Gолос Правды* (The Voice of Truth), Kronstadt, June 27, 1917.

were extremely difficult to maintain, and the Provisional Government and its allies abroad prevented him from returning home.

But the Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and the Petersburg, Moscow and other committees of the Party did a great deal of organisational and political work. The publication of *Правда* was resumed on March 5, and Bolshevik papers also started to come out in Moscow, Kazan, Saratov, Yekaterinburg, Kiev, Kharkov, Minsk, Revel and other cities. City and district Party committees made up teams of organisers, agitators and propagandists who went out to the people, as did all Bolsheviks, to explain current political events and to call for the further advance of the Revolution. Lenin had this intense activity of the Bolshevik organisations in mind when he wrote: "We are for the C.C. in Russia, for *Правда*, for our Party."<sup>1</sup>

When they were able to emerge from underground the Bolsheviks had to start at once working out their tactics on the principal issues of the Revolution. Certain mistakes were made in the process of doing this. The February Revolution had resulted in the bourgeoisie coming to power. In this sense Lenin considered the bourgeois revolution to have been completed. And the fact that alongside the Provisional Government (the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie) there existed the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants' and other Deputies (the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship) indicated that the *transition* to the socialist revolution, which would result in the establishing of the dictatorship of the proletariat, was the task of the day. But the dialectics of the revolutionary process and the peculiarities of introducing the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry (the principal slogan of the Bolsheviks) in the concrete historical conditions of February-March 1917 were not understood at once by many of the Party's leading workers and rank-and-file members. They continued to think, until Lenin's arrival in Russia, that the bourgeois-democratic revolution had not yet been completed because the chief demands of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)'s minimum programme had not been fulfilled (the establishing of a democratic republic, the introduction of the 8-hour day, etc.).

Analysing the Bolshevik Party's activities in the period from March to early July, Lenin later said: "Too often has it happened that, when history has taken a sharp turn, even progressive parties have for some time been unable to adapt themselves to the new situation and have repeated slogans which had formerly been correct but had now lost all meaning—lost it as 'suddenly' as the sharp turn in history was 'sudden'."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 301.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 25, p. 183.

The February Revolution found Lenin in Switzerland. The first news of events in Russia was very brief. Lenin wrote in a letter to I. F. Armand on March 2 (15): "We here in Zurich are in a state of agitation today: there is a telegram in *Zürcher Post* and in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of March 15 that in Russia the revolution was victorious in Petrograd on March 14 after three days of struggle, that 12 members of the Duma are in power and the ministers have all been arrested."<sup>1</sup>

And a day later the news arrived that the bourgeois parties had formed the Provisional Government. This turn of events was not unexpected by Lenin. He had written on January 17, 1917 that developments were quite obviously leading to a revolution which would bring power to "a government of Milyukov and Guchkov, if not of Milyukov and Kerensky".<sup>2</sup> And, of course, Lenin was soon to be proved right.

The leader of the Bolshevik Party looked far ahead and could see clearly the future prospects of the revolution. He wrote on March 3 (16): "This 'first stage of the first revolution (among those engendered by the war)' will not be the last, nor will it be only Russian."<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Lenin firmly opposed the seizure of state power by the "Cadet swindlers", and urged Bolsheviks to organise the civilian population, to create party cells in the armed forces and ensure the transition of full power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies.<sup>4</sup>

With the situation in Russia becoming more and more clear, Lenin specified his ideas on what the tactics of the Bolsheviks should be in relation to the Soviets and to Provisional Government. The prevailing dual power could only be a temporary phenomenon. It was beyond doubt that the main classes—the proletariat and the bourgeoisie—would immediately begin the battle for supremacy. It was essential, therefore, that the importance of the Soviets and the part they had to play in the Revolution was understood.

Lenin recommended the Bolsheviks in Russia to think over and over again the experience of both the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution of 1905-07 and to extend in every possible way the work of organising the Soviets. He reminded them that the workers had themselves set up the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and had then "begun to develop, expand and strengthen it by drawing in soldiers"

deputies, and, undoubtedly, deputies from rural wage-workers, and then (in one form or another) from the entire peasant poor".<sup>1</sup> In his "Draft Theses" of March 4 (17), 1917 Lenin repeated the point which he had made first in 1905 that the Soviets must become the general organisations of the working people; that is why he speaks of extending the workers' organisations (the Soviets) to the Army and to the rural areas.<sup>2</sup> Then in his "Letters from Afar", addressed to *Pravda*, Lenin spoke of the need to spread the Soviets *over the length and breadth of Russia*, from Petrograd to the remotest corners of the land. As the Soviets were to play a decisive part in the revolution, he considered that the setting up and strengthening of such bodies was "the prime and most important task".<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, in the first few months of 1917 many of Lenin's recommendations were late in reaching Russia, and some of his advice was not immediately appreciated for what it was worth.

On March 6 (19) Lenin sent the following cable to the Bolsheviks leaving for Russia: "Our tactics: no trust in and no support of the new government; Kerensky is especially suspect; arming of the proletariat is the only guarantee; immediate elections to the Petrograd City Council; no rapprochement with other parties. Telegraph this to Petrograd."<sup>4</sup> This cable was read to a meeting of the Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) on March 13,<sup>5</sup> and on March 22 the Bureau adopted a detailed resolution "On the Provisional Government" which contained a correct assessment of the class nature of the Provisional Government, and expressed the attitude of the Party to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The latter were regarded as the centres for rallying the country's revolutionary forces and the embryo organs of the future revolutionary government.

"The Party believes the nearest and most vital task facing the Soviets, the fulfilment of which can be the only guarantee of victory over all the forces of counter-revolution and of the revolution's further advance, is the arming of the entire people, in particular the immediate setting up of Workers' Red Guards throughout the country."<sup>6</sup> This resolution in the main took into account Lenin's directives contained in his March 6 cable and in his "Letters from Afar".

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>5</sup> "Minutes of the Bureau of the C.C., R.S.D.L.P.(B.) (March 1917)" in *Voprosy Istorii K.P.S.S.* No. 3, 1962, p. 145 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>6</sup> *Voprosy Istorii K.P.S.S.* No. 5, 1962, p. 113 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 264.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. 35, p. 295.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Vol. 35, p. 296.

The main problems of Bolshevik tactics were discussed at the All-Russia (March) Meeting of Party Workers a few days later.<sup>1</sup> This passed resolutions which were steps backward compared to what had been proclaimed by the Bureau of the Central Committee.<sup>2</sup> For example, its resolution on the Party's attitude towards the Provisional Government did not contain any statement to the effect that the Party regarded the Soviets as organs of revolutionary power. Nor did it state that the Party believed the most immediate and vital task facing the Soviets to be the arming of the entire people and, first of all, the setting up of Workers' Red Guards. Instead the resolution stressed that it was the duty of the Soviets "to keep under vigilant control the Provisional Government's actions both in the centre and the provinces and to induce it to struggle actively for the complete abolition of the old regime".<sup>3</sup>

The All-Russia (March) Meeting failed to define the most important demand of all—that for the transfer of all power both in the centre and the provinces to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. The meeting merely confirmed the need for the revolutionary people to rally round the Soviets as they "are capable, in alliance with other progressive forces, of repulsing the attacks of the tsarist and bourgeois counter-revolutionary forces and of strengthening and extending the gains of the revolutionary movement".<sup>4</sup> On the building of the Soviets themselves, the meeting unanimously spoke in favour of setting up united Soviets to include both workers' and soldiers' sections, for the formation of regional associations of Soviets, and for the convocation (not later than May 15) of an all-Russia congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies with the participation of the organised working peasants.<sup>5</sup>

The end of the meeting's work coincided with Lenin's arrival in Russia on April 3, 1917, truly a red-letter day for Russia's working people. Thousands of Petrograd workers, soldiers and sailors went to the Finland railway station to meet him. Kshesinskaya Palace, where the Central and Petersburg Committees of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) had their premises, was the scene of Lenin's moving reunion with the

<sup>1</sup> The All-Russia (March) Meeting of Party Workers was held in Petrograd from March 27 to April 2, 1917. It was called by the Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) in order to define Party policy at the coming All-Russia Conference of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (see Chapter I).

<sup>2</sup> Out of 70 Party organisations present at the meeting, 30 were joint Bolshevik-Menshevik groups. See *Uoprosy Istorii K.P.S.S.* No. 5, 1962, p. 123 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Uoprosy Istorii K.P.S.S.* No. 6, 1962, p. 141 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

members of the Central Committee and the Petersburg Committee and the active workers of the Petrograd Party organisation. Lenin made a long speech from notes which he appeared to have jotted down just before his arrival in Petrograd. These notes were the original version of the well-known "April Theses".<sup>1</sup>

On April 4 Lenin spoke in Taurida Palace to the Bolshevik delegates to the All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and later repeated his report to a joint meeting of both Bolshevik and Menshevik delegates. *Pravda* printed Lenin's speech under the title "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution" (on April 7). Lenin's speech gave the answers to the principal questions which were worrying Bolsheviks and revolutionary people all over Russia: concerning the war, what attitude to take to the Provisional Government, and the importance of the Soviets.

The deep study which Lenin had made of the experience of the Paris Commune and of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 enabled him to define the Soviets as the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and to advance the concept of a Republic of Soviets: "Not a parliamentary republic—to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step—but a republic of Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers' and Peasants' Deputies throughout the country, from top to bottom."<sup>2</sup>

The analysis of the balance of class forces that had emerged after the second (February) bourgeois-democratic revolution led Lenin to the extremely important conclusion that it was possible for the working class, in alliance with the poorest sections of the peasantry, to win power by peaceful means, without an armed uprising. Lenin pointed out that such opportunities occurred but rarely in history and that was what made them so valuable—because to establish working-class power by peaceful means would be most in the interests of the people and would best suit them. "This course would have been the least painful, and it was therefore necessary to fight for it most energetically."<sup>3</sup>

What were the objective conditions which led Lenin to indicate a peaceful path of revolution to the Bolshevik Party in April? First of all there were the radical changes in the whole socio-political system brought about by the overthrow of the tsar. Russia became the most free and the most democratic of the belligerent nations. Workers and soldiers (or rather, as Lenin put it, peasants in soldiers' uniform)

<sup>1</sup> *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. A Biography*, Moscow, 1966, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 25, p. 185.

took advantage of their newly-won freedom to set up Soviets on their own revolutionary initiative, and these organisations directly represented the *majority* of the people who held arms in their hands. At the same time, because of the insufficient class-consciousness and class organisation of the proletariat, the Soviets now found themselves with representatives of petty-bourgeois parties—who, because of their class background, were unable to take any definite stand and wavered constantly between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie—in the majority. The S.R. and Menshevik Soviets had by agreement, and *of their own free will*, handed over power to the Provisional Government, which could never have survived without the support of the Soviets of Deputies. The Government was unstable and faltering. The bourgeoisie was holding power by deceiving the people, who unfortunately had implicit faith in it.

Lenin explained that the Provisional Government based itself on the “support” given to the bourgeoisie by the *second* government—the Petrograd Soviet and the overwhelming majority of local Soviets throughout the country. Under these conditions, to call for the immediate overthrow of the Provisional Government would have been equivalent to mounting an attack on the Soviets themselves and on the majority of the workers and the soldiers. No Marxist party could contemplate that.

Lenin perseveringly explained that in the existing situation the only possible and correct line for the Bolshevik Party was one of struggle to change the composition and the work of the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’, and Peasants’ Deputies, to win them over to its side, to carry through a socialist revolution and to make the Soviets state organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

“We must ably, carefully, clear people’s minds and lead the proletariat and poor peasantry *forward*, away from ‘dual power’ towards the full power of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies,”<sup>1</sup> Lenin said.

Lenin’s line, the line of peaceful struggle to win full power for the Soviets, was diametrically opposed to the line of the petty-bourgeois parties. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s claimed that the working people would be able to take power in Russia only after “revolutionary democracy itself” had “matured” enough to rule the country. But this belief signified nothing but the petty-bourgeois’ fear of a socialist revolution, and the desire to put it off indefinitely.

Lenin foresaw the possibility that the time would come when the Soviets would be forced to take power because the actions of the proletariat, becoming more and more powerful as its class-consciousness

grew, would make the ground under the feet of the petty-bourgeois and populist parties within the Soviets extremely hot. Lenin and the Bolsheviks fully realised that the transfer of state power to the Soviets of conciliators would not alter the nature of the petty-bourgeois parties in the least. Their social origin would continue to compel them to vacillate between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, striving to serve the propertied classes whenever possible. But this would then happen under complete Soviet rule, i.e., after the Soviets had broken away from the bourgeoisie, and before the eyes of the revolutionary masses, who would be empowered to make ample use of their right to recall deputies.

Single rule, i.e., full Soviet power, would considerably speed up the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist revolution. The revolutionary party of the proletariat, so long as it remained in opposition, would go on criticising and exposing the conciliators’ inconsistency until the workers, soldiers and peasants recognised the inability of the petty-bourgeois parties to solve the main questions of the revolution. The working people would, through their own political experience and the influence of Bolshevik agitation, overcome their illusions about the revolutionary character of the “socialist” parties and move under the banner of the Marxist-Leninist party.

In determining the line of the peaceful development of the Revolution, of making the fullest use of all available methods of establishing Soviet power peacefully, Lenin also foresaw the possibility of the bourgeoisie unleashing a civil war, thus making the suppression of the bourgeoisie unavoidable. Therefore Lenin considered the most vital tasks of the day for the working class and its party to be those of forming detachments of Red Guards, uniting the urban proletariat, organising the rural proletarian and semi-proletarian sections of the people, and winning the Army over to the side of the revolution.

Thus, long before October, Lenin had determined the two possible roads of development of the socialist revolution, and had armed the proletariat and its party with a clear-cut programme of struggle for peace, democracy and socialism.

Lenin’s brilliant plan for making the transition from the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the socialist revolution aroused the fury of the conciliators’ parties and the parties of the bourgeoisie. The reactionary press screamed that Lenin and his followers were “the agents of German imperialism”. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s seconded this monstrous slander. They shouted that Lenin was “doing the enemy a favour”, “jeopardising the revolution”, and so on. Plekhanov’s

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 32-33.

newspaper *Yedinstvo* described "The April Theses" as "delirious ravings".

Within the Bolshevik Party itself Kamenev, Rykov, Pyatakov and a small handful of their followers spoke against Lenin's "Theses". They claimed that Russia was "not yet ripe for a socialist revolution". In the debate on "The April Theses" at a meeting of the Bureau of the C.G. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) on April 6, Kamenev, Zinoviev and Shlyapnikov opposed Lenin. In solidarity with the Mensheviks, Kamenev objected to Lenin's comparing the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to the Paris Commune. He subsequently published an article in *Pravda* called "Our Differences" in which he opposed his semi-Menshevik views to Lenin's call for a socialist revolution.

The discussion of "The April Theses" in the Party organisations of Petrograd, Moscow, Kiev and other cities, which preceded the 7th All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), indicates that Lenin's recognition that the dictatorship of the proletariat would take the state form of a Republic of Soviets was not understood immediately. S. Y. Bogdatyev, a member of the Petrograd Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), suggested that the point of establishing a Republic of Soviets be deleted from the "Theses".<sup>1</sup> At the Moscow City Party Committee's preliminary exchange of opinions on "The April Theses" on April 20 two points in particular were discussed: the idea of changing the name of the Party and the Party's attitude to the Soviets. Some Comrades (R. S. Zemlyachka, Y. D. Lentsman, Y. Y. Peche and others) expressed doubts about whether a Republic of Soviets could be created without bourgeois representation in the Soviets, especially as the Soviets were, as they called them, "transitional forms of power".<sup>2</sup>

Some Bolsheviks continued to defend the demand for a democratic republic as written into the Party programme adopted by the 2nd Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.).<sup>3</sup> But in the 14 years that had passed since the adoption of this first programme there had been two bourgeois-democratic revolutions and a radical change in the balance of class forces. This had made all political parties, not only the Bolsheviks, revise their views on the future state system of Russia. Lenin said that by March-April 1917 even the members of the ruling Cadet Party had become "republicans of yesterday—republicans against their will". It was therefore a question of what kind of democratic republic was wanted by the various classes and parties.

<sup>1</sup> *The First Legal Petersburg Committee of Bolsheviks in 1917*, p. 85 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Essays on the History of the October Revolution in Moscow*, pp. 72-73; *Party Archives of the M.C. and the M.C.C. of the C.P.S.U.*, File 3 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>3</sup> *C.P.S.U. in Resolutions*, Part 1, p. 40 (Russ. ed.).

The Mensheviks' ideal was a bourgeois republic with the existing Provisional Government at its head. But the Bolsheviks' demand for a Republic of Soviets was the most progressive and expressed the interests of the great majority of the Russian population. The slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" eventually became the principal slogan of the socialist revolution, but in order to make it clear to the working people an enormous amount of political work had to be done, including agitation at meetings, in the press, and at workers' hostels and soldiers' barracks.

The discussion of Lenin's "April Theses" in the Party's organisations led to more active political work, raised the ideological standards of Party members and prepared them for the struggle against their political opponents. Lenin set a personal example of how the required explanatory work should be done by writing 150 articles on the various aspects of the advance of the revolution and several booklets in the three months after his arrival in Russia.<sup>1</sup>

Within two or three weeks of the appearance of Lenin's "Theses" the whole of the Bolshevik Party had rallied round them, and this was the situation in which the 7th (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) was held in Petrograd on April 24-29, 1917. This conference was an important landmark in the elaboration of Bolshevik Party tactics during the period of transition from the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the socialist revolution. In accordance with Lenin's "April Theses" the 7th Conference decided to alter the Party's programme on the question of the state to the demand for a democratic workers'-peasants' republic, i.e., for Soviet power.<sup>2</sup>

Of particular importance to the organisations of the Party of the proletariat in their battle to win the Soviets over to their side were Lenin's instructions on adhering strictly to an independent class line inside the Soviets and separating proletarian elements in them from petty-bourgeois ones—revolutionaries from opportunists, internationalists from "defencists"—i.e., a policy of Bolshevikising the Soviets before the proletariat had taken power. "The Soviets are important to us not as a form," said Lenin, "to us it is important what classes they represent."<sup>3</sup>

Following Lenin, and taking into account the experience that the Party had gained in the course of the formation of the Soviets and in the extension of their sphere of activity, the 7th All-Russia (April)

<sup>1</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, p. 75 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *C.P.S.U. in Resolutions*, Part 1, p. 852 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 230.

Party Conference decided that the tasks of the Party should be as follows: to work persistently to awaken their class consciousness and unite the workers of town and country—since only this could ensure the successful transfer of all state power to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies—and to increase the number of Soviets, to strengthen them and to carry out all-round work within them to rally the proletarian, internationalist sections of the Party.<sup>1</sup>

The agrarian programme of the Bolsheviks was also an integral part of Lenin's plan for the socialist revolution. The abolition of the survivals of serfdom, the confiscation of landowners' estates, church land, "cabinet" land, etc., and the nationalisation of all land in the country and its immediate transfer to the peasants organised in the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies or other truly democratic organs of local self-government totally independent of the landowners and government officials—these were the demands of the Bolsheviks that were to attract the broad peasant masses.

The Provisional Government and the petty-bourgeois Menshevik and S.R. parties deceived the peasants and appealed for the "peaceful settlement" of conflicts with landowners, and urged them to wait until the agrarian question as a whole had been solved by a Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks, who regarded the peasantry as the proletariat's ally, gave their full support to the revolutionary seizure of landowners' estates, and advised the peasants to organise land requisitioning in such a way as to avoid causing damage to property and with an eye to increasing production.

Only the poorest sections of the peasantry were capable of being the reliable allies of the working class in the socialist revolution. The April Conference therefore considered it necessary to begin immediately the universal and independent organisation of the rural proletariat into Soviets of Deputies of agricultural workers, with special Soviets of Deputies for semi-proletarian peasants, and to organise proletarian groups or factions in the general Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and in all local and city organs of government.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to examining the question of the Bolshevik Party's attitude to the Soviets of the Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the April Conference also heard the reports of the representatives of local Party organisations on the work of the Soviets in Petrograd, Moscow, the Central Industrial Area, the Volga Area, the Urals, the Donbas and Siberia, and on the work of the soldiers' committees in the Army at the front lines. Lenin highly praised the work of the Bolshevik

organisations in the formation and strengthening of the Soviets. He remarked at the conference that the information given by local comrades on the work of the Soviets was of extreme interest in that it enabled the Party to check its slogans against the actual course of life.<sup>1</sup>

The further progress of the revolution and its development into a socialist one depended in many respects on the stand taken by the Petrograd Soviet, which was the central Soviet body prior to the convocation of the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets. Meanwhile, the line of collaboration with the bourgeoisie taken by its S.R.-Menshevik majority was becoming more and more obvious. V. P. Nogin, in his report to the April Conference "On the Party's Attitude to the Soviets", pointed out that the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet consisted, to a great extent, of chance people whom nobody had delegated, but who claimed to represent all the workers of Russia.<sup>2</sup> Conference delegates V. V. Kurayev (Penza), Y. O. Yefimov (Moscow) and others said that the Petrograd Soviet was "dragging behind events", and that the conciliation of the Petrograd Soviet was intolerable because "it corrupted the provincial Soviets".<sup>3</sup>

P. I. Eiland, a delegate from the Party organisation of the Latvian Riflemen (12th Army), voiced the demands of the revolutionary masses in relation to the central Soviets when he stated that the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies were the most authoritative bodies in the country, and, therefore, were under an obligation to take the country's destiny in their hands. But to achieve this the line of the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets above all would have to be changed so that they fulfilled the duties they had been mandated to.<sup>4</sup>

The collective experience of the Party, combined with Lenin's genius, enabled the Bolsheviks to work out the correct tactics for the socialist revolution. Lenin later wrote, when assessing the importance of the theoretical work of the Bolshevik Party in determining correctly the Soviets' role and significance in the revolution and in winning the dictatorship of the proletariat: "At our Party Conference in April 1917 we raised the following question, theoretically and politically: 'What is Soviet power, what is its substance and what is its historical significance?'."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, p. 145 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 468.

<sup>1</sup> C.P.S.U. in Resolutions, Part 1, p. 339 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341 (Russ. ed.).

The April Party Conference thus set the Bolsheviks two aims in relation to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. In the first place, it called on all party organisations to do their best to support and encourage the initiative of local Soviets to establish single rule and control over production and distribution, introduce an 8-hour working day and seize landowners' estates, etc. Secondly, the conference oriented the Bolshevik Party on developing an active struggle *inside* the Soviets for the triumph of a strictly proletarian line, and directed all the effort and attention of Party organisations to the enlightenment and uniting of the workers, soldiers and peasants, to the arming of the workers, and in short to the creation of the political army of the socialist revolution.

Lenin, speaking in Petrograd to a city meeting of Party activists on May 8, summed up the results of the All-Russia Conference and exhorted the capital's Party organisation to develop its political work in the districts, factories and among the troops. "We Bolsheviks," Lenin said, "must patiently and perseveringly explain our views to the workers and peasants.... That is the only way we can get the people to understand our doctrine, to think over their experience and really take power into their own hands."<sup>1</sup>

After the April Conference Party organisations began to pay much more attention to the Soviets. For example, the Moscow Party Committee had no less than five discussions in the space of two months on the Bolsheviks' activities in the city and district Soviets.<sup>2</sup>

A. S. Bubnov and others were elected to the E.C. of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and G. I. Lomov, G. A. Usiyevich were co-opted onto it. This strengthened the Bolshevik faction and raised its authority. On June 22 the Moscow Party Committee discussed a report of V. A. Obukh on the position of the Bolshevik faction in the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies. It had become more numerous, united and militant. But its links with the districts still remained weak and the Moscow Committee was anxious to strengthen the influence of the district and factory Party organisations in the Soviets regarding the winning of the Soviets in Moscow to the side of the Bolsheviks as a matter of prime importance. R. S. Zemlyachka and O. A. Pyatnitsky suggested establishing close ties between the Bolshevik factions in the district Soviets and the Bolshevik faction in the Moscow Soviet.<sup>3</sup> The Moscow Committee then worked out a stat-

ute for the Bolshevik factions in the city and district Soviets and regulations governing their relations with the Party organisations. These were intended to unite all Communist deputies. The factions were allowed to have their own executive organs (bureaus), which were to work in liaison with the M. C. executive commission, and it was recommended that the work of the Bolsheviks in the Moscow Soviet and in the district Soviets be co-ordinated through joint meetings of faction members and responsible workers of Party committees. The Bolshevik factions were entrusted with carrying out organisational and political work during the re-elections to the Soviets.<sup>1</sup>

The objective situation which had been brought about by the peaceful development of the Revolution was favourable to the Bolsheviks in their battle to win over the political and other organisations of the working people. It became essential to make the maximum use of legal means of campaigning, and to direct into the Soviets as many Communists as possible and to begin working seriously in them. All regional, city and district Party committees gave full consideration to this after the April Conference.

The Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) heard a report from V. P. Nogin on May 17 on the increasing influence of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets of the Moscow region. The resolution adopted on this report stressed that Party organisations should concentrate mostly on setting up independent factions in the Soviets which would rally around themselves all internationalist elements, and that the factions must establish firm contacts with local Party organisations and elect executive bodies to take charge of their day-to-day work (faction bureaus, secretariats and so on).<sup>2</sup> In late June the next plenary meeting of the Moscow Regional Bureau again discussed the question of Bolshevik activity in the Soviets in connection with the changed situation produced by the renewed offensive of the Russian Army. It was stated then that the Bolsheviks had considerably strengthened their positions in those places where Party organisations had actively struggled to carry out the decisions of the April Conference. Independent Bolshevik factions had been formed in the Soviets of Alexandrov, Voronezh, Kineshma, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Yaroslavl, Yuryev-Polskoi and other towns.

The problems of organising the work of the Bolshevik factions in the Soviets were also discussed by the Middle Siberia Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and by the Kazan, Yekaterinburg and

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> "Minutes of the Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) for May-June 1917" in *Proletarskaya Revolutsia* (The Proletarian Revolution) No. 4 (63), 1927, pp. 255-56 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 41, p. 433.  
<sup>2</sup> "Materials of the Party Archives of the M.C. and the M.C.C. of the C.P.S.U. for 1917."  
<sup>3</sup> Ibid., File 3.

other Party committees. The Samara Gubernia R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Committee worked out a special programme for the Bolshevik faction in the City Soviet. This made it incumbent upon all members of the faction to oppose any compromise with the bourgeoisie and to come out for the transfer of the land to the peasants, for the introduction of the 8-hour working day and for workers' control over production. Bolshevik deputies were called on to work tirelessly to unite the working people around the Soviets, to support in every possible way all proletarian revolutionary initiatives, and to explain to the voters the necessity of controlling the activities of their representatives in the Soviets.<sup>1</sup>

The formation of the independent Bolshevik factions in the Soviets proceeded with the deepening of the division in the R.S.D.L.P. organisations between the Marxist-Leninist internationalist groups and the Menshevik and defencist groups. The number of Bolsheviks had grown to 80,000 by the time of the April Conference, 14,000 (17.5 per cent) of them in joint organisations with the Mensheviks. Four months later there had been a threefold growth in the Bolsheviks' ranks, with the joint organisations containing 27,000 (a little over 11 per cent).<sup>2</sup>

May-June 1917 saw the formation of Bolshevik factions in the Soviets of Nizhni-Novgorod, Tula, Kharkov, Grozny, Izhevsk, Minsk and other places. The formation of the Bolshevik factions in all Soviets was not, however, completed until after the victory of the October Revolution.

### 3. THE ATTITUDE OF THE SOVIETS TO THE WAR. THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES DURING THE APRIL POLITICAL CRISIS

One of the most vital problems of 1917 was that of bringing the war to an end. The workers and soldiers, having carried through the February Revolution, had hoped for the rapid cessation of hostilities and the signing of a just and democratic peace treaty. But the Russian bourgeoisie understood matters differently. It strove to turn to its own advantage the political enthusiasm evoked by the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy in order to realise its aggressive plans. As before, it advanced the slogan: "Fight to a victorious end." But unlike in pre-revolutionary times, the exploiting classes now covered

<sup>1</sup> *Privolzhskaya Pravda* (Volga Area Pravda), June 11, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The C.P.S.U. A Reference Book*, Moscow, 1963, p. 108 (Russ. ed.).

up their real intentions by making demagogic statements about the need "to defend free Russia". They received active assistance in this from the petty-bourgeois parties. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s claimed that the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution had produced a radical change in the nature of the war, that it was no longer an aggressive imperialist war, and called on the people "to defend their homeland". In order to avoid the charge of serving the bourgeoisie the conciliators put forward the ideas of "revolutionary defence".

During March and April, when millions upon millions of people, absolutely inexperienced in politics, had begun to participate actively in the country's political life for the first time, the idea of "revolutionary defence" gained ground not only among the enormous mass of the petty bourgeoisie but also among some sections of the proletariat. But Lenin and the Bolsheviks drew a sharp distinction between the mass defencist spirit which gripped the peasants and the workers and that which animated the Mensheviks and the S.R.s. In the case of the working people their spirit of "defence" was the result of deception by the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties. The broad masses of the workers and soldiers sincerely believed that with the tsar removed the war had changed its character and it had become necessary to defend the country. Because of this, Lenin formulated in "The April Theses", as one of the pressing Party tasks of the day, the need for steady and patient explanatory work among the working people to indicate to them their mistake. He urged the Bolsheviks to "explain the inseparable connection existing between capital and the imperialist war, and to prove that without overthrowing capital *it is impossible* to end the war by a truly democratic peace, a peace not imposed by violence".<sup>1</sup>

But unlike the delusions of the workers and peasants, the defence spirit was peddled by the conciliators for a quite definite purpose. Speaking in support of his "April Theses" Lenin said:

"The 'revolutionary defencism' of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, i.e., of Chkhheidze, Tsereteli and Steklov, is a chauvinist trend a hundred times more harmful for being cloaked in honeyed phrases, an attempt to reconcile the masses with the Provisional Revolutionary Government."<sup>2</sup> And the bourgeoisie was quick to take advantage of the "revolutionary intoxication" of the workers and soldiers, deluded by the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, to gain its own selfish ends. The Provisional Government issued an appeal to the civilian population

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

and to the soldiers at the front on March 6. It appealed to the soldiers to maintain and strengthen discipline and to obey their officers; at the same time it promised to supply the Army with everything necessary to bring the war to a victorious conclusion.<sup>1</sup>

The Provisional Government then announced to the Allies its intention to continue with the foreign policy of the former tsarist government. As early as on March 4 Foreign Minister P. N. Milyukov sent to Russian diplomatic representatives abroad a circular saying that the Provisional Government would "respect the commitments entered into by the fallen regime".<sup>2</sup> On the same day he radioed the governments of the Allied Powers to assure them of the Provisional Government's determination "to make every possible effort and sacrifice to secure victory over the enemy".<sup>3</sup> Twenty days later Milyukov made a statement to the press on the foreign policy of the Provisional Government. This again left no doubt as to Russia's intention of continuing the war under the Provisional Government, the aim being to seize the Bosphorus, take parts of Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and so on.<sup>4</sup>

On March 27 the Provisional Government issued a Declaration "To the Citizens of Russia". Amidst much double-talk this clearly expressed the imperialist policy of the Government. On Tsereteli's advice "democratic" slogans were employed to disguise the predatory plans of the Russian bourgeoisie. The Declaration spoke of the Government's striving for peace on the basis of national self-determination while stressing the need to "adhere fully to commitments undertaken in relation to our allies".<sup>5</sup>

It was quite clear that all this was not going to satisfy the revolutionary masses. The workers and soldiers passed resolutions at numerous meetings insisting that the Petrograd Soviet take practical steps to conclude a peace settlement. Under this pressure from the mass movement the conciliators were compelled to do something, so they decided to issue an Appeal entitled "To the Nations of the World" on behalf of the Petrograd Soviet.

But this Appeal again deliberately smoothed over the war's plundering imperialist nature and evaded the question of how to win a just and democratic peace. Yet the Appeal straightforwardly put it

that "the Russian revolution will not retreat before the invaders' bayonets...", i.e., it expressed the desire to go on with the war.<sup>1</sup>

Both the wording of the Appeal and especially the interpretation given it by Chkhheidze caused dissatisfaction in the workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet. Deputy F. P. Matveyev, one of the participants in the meeting that adopted the Appeal, recalls that during the debate there were loud protests: "There is no real peace proposal here, it is a mere call!", "The editing is weak, there are no resolute and precise terms...", etc.<sup>2</sup>

Lenin sharply criticised the Appeal of the Petrograd Soviet "To the Nations of the World" as grossly confused theoretically and as representing the worst sort of political helplessness. It "means condemning yourself [Mensheviks and S.R.s—A. A.] and the whole of your policy," said V. I. Lenin, "to the shakiest and most unstable position and trend".<sup>3</sup>

Local Soviets by and large shared the Petrograd Soviet's position on the war and adopted similar defencist resolutions. The Moscow Soviet declared that it "added its voice to that of the Petrograd Soviet".<sup>4</sup> The Yekaterinburg Soviet passed a resolution approving the Petrograd Soviet's appeal but urging that the Provisional Government "should not strive to seize and conquer foreign lands but should openly, for all to see, make attempts to persuade all the belligerent nations to begin peaceful negotiations immediately based on the recognition of the right of nations to self-determination".<sup>5</sup>

The question of what attitude to adopt to the war came under discussion at all regional and area congresses of Soviets held in March and April as well as at the All-Russia Conference of Soviets. The first Congress of Soviets of the Volga Area and the South Urals condemned the slogan "War to a victorious finish", yet its resolution demanded "the repulsing of the external enemy".<sup>6</sup> The Moscow regional conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies adopted a resolution on March 26 on its attitude to the war which was imbued with the concept of "revolutionary defence".<sup>7</sup> The All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies also fully approved the "defence" stand taken by the E.C. of the Petro-

<sup>1</sup> *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva* (Provisional Government Herald), March 23, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, March 5, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Russkiye Uzdomosti* (Russian Herald), March 23, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva*, March 28, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, March 15, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> F. P. Matveyev, *From the Notebook of a Deputy of Infantry Regiment No. 176*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1932, p. 43 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, March 17, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Uralskaya Zhizn* (Urals Life), March 25, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> *The Saratov Soviet of Workers' Deputies (1917-1918)*, pp. 58-68.

<sup>7</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

grad Soviet. The Conference adopted an S.R.-Menshevik resolution containing an appeal for "the mobilisation of all the living forces of the country in all fields of life in order to strengthen the front and the rear", i.e., to continue the war.<sup>1</sup>

These actions of the petty-bourgeois parties making up the majority in the Soviets gave the Provisional Government a free hand. Foreign Minister P. N. Milyukov "explained" the Appeal "To the Citizens of Russia" in his own way. He made a statement to Cadet Party members during a visit to Moscow to the effect that the March 27 Government Declaration did not contain peace terms but only the general points of principle which had been repeatedly proclaimed not only by Russia but by the statements of all the Allied Powers. As for peace terms, "they could be worked out only in agreement with the Allies and in accordance with the London Convention", i.e., the treaty which Nicholas II had signed with the British and French imperialists. Milyukov went on to say that "one should not ignore the principles recognised by all the Allies for the reunification of the Poles and the Armenians, and for the satisfaction of the national aspirations of the Austrian slavs". In other words, Milyukov recognised as "legal" the annexation of foreign lands already invaded by the Entente imperialists, as well as any fresh annexations.<sup>2</sup>

Milyukov's belligerent statements were completely in line with the bourgeois Provisional Government's foreign policy, and the steps which the Government took to promote the war exposed its true character ever more clearly. Beginning with April the Russian High Command was clamouring for reinforcements to be sent to the armies at the front. The question of sending regular soldiers to the front lines was discussed by the Petrograd Soviet on April 16. It transpired that General Staff had already drawn up a plan for the supply of reserves according to which certain sections of the front were to receive reinforcements from the Petrograd garrison troops. The Menshevik N. D. Sokolov proposed the following "compromise" resolution on behalf of the E. C. of the Petrograd Soviet: "Bearing in mind the Provisional Government's commitment and the need at the front, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies considers it necessary to send troops to the front as the need may arise." The Menshevik and S.R. factions gave their unconditional support to this resolution, while the Bolsheviks strongly objected to it and proposed their own draft resolution as follows: "In view of 1) the intensification of

counter-revolution, 2) the spreading of slanders and 3) the need for troops to be sent to work in the fields, the Petrograd Soviet considers it undesirable to send regular soldiers away from Petrograd but to send police forces to the front instead." The Mensheviks and the S.R.s pulled through the "defence" resolution and used it as a screen to cover up the preparations of the Russian Army for the June offensive.

The Government crisis produced by the Milyukov Note brought out in clear relief the collusion between the Petrograd Soviet S.R.-Menshevik bloc and the bourgeoisie. On April 18 Milyukov authorised Russian ambassadors abroad by cable to circulate a Note stating that the Provisional Government "hurries to add its voice to those of the Allies and declares that there are no grounds for believing that the revolution which has taken place involves any weakening of the part Russia is playing in the common Allied effort". The Provisional Government "will keep to the commitments undertaken in relation to our Allies . . . believing firmly in a victorious end to the present war".<sup>1</sup>

This constituted a direct challenge from the Cadets and the Octobrists to the revolutionary classes. The Provisional Government had taken this incomplete disregard of the Petrograd Soviet, to whose Executive Committee the text of the Note was delivered only after it had been sent to Paris and London and announced to the press. This caused embarrassment even among some sections of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s. *Dyelo Naroda* complained about "this stab in the back of democracy from the secret nooks and crannies of Milyukov's diplomacy", and was compelled to admit that Milyukov's Note had in fact "annulled" the March 27 Declaration of the Provisional Government.<sup>2</sup> The Menshevik *Novaya Zhizn* expressed its belief that the "Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies will lose no time in taking the most energetic steps to render Mr. Milyukov harmless".<sup>3</sup>

On receiving Milyukov's Note on the night of April 18-19, the Petrograd Soviet E.C. began to discuss it. The conciliators tried to justify the Provisional Government by claiming that "nothing special has happened". I. G. Tsereteli, for example, made a tremendous effort to prove that many of the points which Milyukov had mentioned in his Note "are in full conformity with the general peaceful aspirations of democracy". M. I. Skobelev maintained that "one should not demand full coincidence between the aspirations of democracy and the

<sup>1</sup> *The All-Russia Conference of Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, pp. 291, 292 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Rech*, April 11, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> *Vestnik Uremennogo Pravitelstva*, April 20, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Dyelo Naroda*, April 20, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life), April 20, 1917.

stand taken by the Government". No decision was taken and the discussion was adjourned.<sup>1</sup>

Only the broad masses of the workers and soldiers were taken completely by surprise by Milyukov's Note. The sincere supporters of the policy of "defence" were indignant. "They *felt*—they did not understand it quite clearly, but they felt that they had been tricked,"<sup>2</sup> Lenin said.

Meetings were called at Petrograd factories to protest against the bourgeois Government's anti-popular policy. The workers of the Putilov Works declared: "Now that the Provisional Government fails to take into consideration the views and decisions of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies there can be no further support for it. We demand that the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies remove the Provisional Government from power and take power itself."<sup>3</sup> Similar resolutions were passed by the workers of the Old Lessner, Rozencranz, Phoenix and Baltic works, the optical engineering works and other factories.<sup>4</sup>

Milyukov's Note also aroused unrest among the troops of the Petrograd garrison. The men of the Yegersky Regiment stated that the Note "had created an abyss between the Government and the people".<sup>5</sup> And the soldiers' committee of the Novoladozhsky Infantry Regiment No. 436 insisted that the Petrograd Soviet should not give an inch to the Government so long as it supported bourgeois aggressive military plans, but should take a firm stand in the working people's interests. "Our bayonets," the men wrote, "are always ready to back you [the Petrograd Soviet.—A. A.] and our common cause."<sup>6</sup>

The general indignation of the workers and soldiers of Petrograd over the anti-popular line of the Provisional Government brought them onto the streets on April 20 in a powerful demonstration of protest. The men of the 180th and Finland Reserve Regiments left their barracks and marched to Mariinsky Palace together with units of the Kexholm and Pavlov Guards Regiments and the sailors of the 2nd Baltic and Guards Naval Depots. In all, not less than 25,000 men assembled in the square in front of Mariinsky Palace. The cries went up: "Down with Milyukov!", "Down with aggressive policies!"

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> M. Mitelman, *1917 at the Putilov Works*, Leningrad, 1939, p. 80 (Russ. ed.)

<sup>4</sup> *The Petrograd Bolsheviks in 1917 (A Record of Revolutionary Events in Petrograd)*, Leningrad, 1957, p. 43; *The Great October Socialist Revolution. A Record of Events*, Vol. I, p. 532 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>5</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, p. 94 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>6</sup> *Pravda*, April 27, 1917.

The Petrograd Soviet sent Zavadye, Gots and Skobelev as its representatives to meet the demonstrators. They tried to persuade the soldiers and sailors to return to their barracks but failed. The mass meeting passed the following resolution: "Having acquainted ourselves with Milyukov's Note concerning the aims of the war, we express our indignation at this shameless act, which obviously contradicts the Appeal of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies 'To the Peoples of the World' and the Declaration of the Provisional Government itself, and demand Milyukov's immediate resignation."<sup>1</sup> This resolution shows that in April the soldiers were not yet aware of the class character of the bourgeois Provisional Government and naively believed that it would be possible to get a change of foreign policy by simply replacing one minister by another.

Petrograd's workers, however, put forward more politically advanced slogans. At noon on April 20 they marched from the capital's working-class areas—the Vyborg and Petrograd districts, and Vasilievsky Island—to Taurida Palace, where the City Soviet met. The workers of the Putilov Works were at the head of the procession. They were joined by the women workers of the Treugolnik (Triangle) Factory and the workers from the Franco-Russian and other factories. Their banners read: "Long Live the Power of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies!" and "Long Live the 3rd International!"

The supporters of the Provisional Government replied to the peaceful demonstration of the workers and soldiers by collecting a crowd of officers, cadets from the officers' training schools, tradesmen and civil servants, who went onto Nevsky Prospekt carrying posters and shouting: "Have Confidence in the Provisional Government!", "War to a Victorious Finish!", "Long Live Milyukov!", "Arrest Lenin!" These agents of the bourgeoisie attacked the workers in the streets, sniped at them from round corners, and staged other provocations. Skirmishes occurred in some places and the situation in the capital became extremely tense. About 100,000 workers and soldiers took part in meetings and demonstrations on April 20 and the following day.<sup>2</sup> Lenin remarked later that during April 20-21 the country "experienced very strong spontaneous outbursts" which "came very close to starting a civil war".<sup>3</sup>

The workers of Moscow were the first to react to the events in

<sup>1</sup> *The History of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, 1962, pp. 55-56 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Petrograd Bolsheviks in 1917*, Vol. I, p. 43 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 29.

Petrograd. Meetings of protest against the Milyukov Note were held there on April 21. Demonstrators' posters proclaimed: "Down with the Bourgeois Provisional Government!", "Down with Guchkov and Milyukov!", etc. Thousands of workers of the Zamoskvorechye District and the soldiers of the 55th Reserve Infantry Regiment lodged protests with the Moscow Soviet about the Milyukov Note and voiced their lack of confidence in the Provisional Government, stating their preparedness to give armed support if necessary to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>1</sup> There were also crowded demonstrations in Minsk, Nizhni-Novgorod, Kharkov and Yekaterinburg on April 20-21, and the Soviets of Lugansk, Kramatorsk, Gorlovka and other towns and miners' settlements of the Donbas passed resolutions condemning Milyukov's Note and expressing their solidarity with the workers of Petrograd.<sup>2</sup>

The protests of the workers and soldiers were echoed in the rural areas. The peasants of Rezekne Volost (Rezekne Uyezd, Vitebsk Gubernia) adopted a resolution which declared: "The Provisional Government does not protect the interests of the workers and peasants but represents the predatory interests of the bourgeoisie and land-owners. We therefore regard the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies as the only true Government."<sup>3</sup> And the peasants of Kozelsk Uyezd, Kaluga Gubernia, demanded the removal of the Provisional Government which, they said, "only acts as a brake on the revolutionary movement", and the transfer of all power to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which, "relying on the revolutionary proletariat, must bring the war to an end".<sup>4</sup>

This was how the April political crisis began, the first since the February Revolution. The Provisional Government's imperialist policy ran against the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population, and significant sections of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie swung from the side of the capitalists to that of the revolutionary working class. Favourable conditions appeared for the peaceful transfer of power to the Soviets, avoiding an armed uprising. This solution would have been decisive in drawing nearer both the socialist revolution and the end of the world war.

The Milyukov Note did not come as a surprise to the Bolshevik Party. Lenin had written the day before it appeared that the Bolsheviks

<sup>1</sup> *The Preparation for and the Victory of the October Revolution in Moscow*, pp. 109-10 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> K. Kikhtev, *The Donbas Communists in the Period of Preparing for and Carrying Through the October Socialist Revolution*, Kiev, 1954, p. 54 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Pravda*, April 28, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, May 4, 1917.

were doing their utmost to make it clear to the broad masses "that in order to end the war by a truly non-coercive peace it is necessary that state power be placed wholly and exclusively in the hands of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies".<sup>1</sup> This point of Lenin's was the key-note of all the decisions of the Bolshevik Party in relation to the war.

The April demonstrations of the Petrograd workers and garrison troops and the support given by the Bolsheviks to the mass demand for the replacement of the Provisional Government by Soviet power alarmed the S.R. and Menshevik leaders. V. M. Chernov conveyed the feelings of the Petrograd Soviet leadership: "...Crowds of soldiers, sailors and workers stormed Taurida Palace forcing power on the Soviet, while the Soviet locked itself away to keep from this power."<sup>2</sup>

On the evening of April 20 the Petrograd Soviet called an emergency meeting. It was rather stormy. Soldiers' deputies insisted on "the immediate removal of Milyukov from the Government", while Chernov, on behalf of the S.R.s, appealed for "calm" until the conclusion of talks that were pending between the E.C. and the Provisional Government. The Bolshevik faction in the Executive Committee suggested the way out of the political crisis that would have met the demands of the vast majority of the country's population: the transfer of power to the Soviets: "Not to take power now is a mistake."<sup>3</sup> After a prolonged debate the Petrograd Soviet approved Chkhheidze's proposal "not to take any decision on Milyukov's Note of April 18 until after a complete investigation by the Executive Committee in personal exchanges with the Council of Ministers".<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile reports came in from all over the country of the readiness of the revolutionary masses to support any firm action taken by the Petrograd Soviet. An emergency meeting of the Helsingfors Soviet of Army, Navy and Workers' Deputies passed a resolution stating that "the time has come for the imperialist Provisional Government to go, a Government which does not carry out the will of the people...". The Baltic sailors assured the Petrograd Soviet that they were ready to support any revolutionary action it might take.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> V. Chernov, "The Soviets in Our Revolution" in *The Year of the Russian Revolution (1917-1918)*, Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1918, pp. 58-59 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> G. N. Golikov, Y. S. Tokarev, "The April Crisis of 1917" in *Historical Notes*, Vol. 57, p. 47 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, April 21, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Izvestia*, Helsingfors Soviet of Army, Navy and Workers' Deputies, April 26, 1917.

The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Kramatorsk District of the Donbas expressed the hope that "the Petrograd Soviet will find a way out of the present situation and lead the country out of the bloody impasse which bourgeois rule has led it into. It will receive our enthusiastic support in doing this."<sup>1</sup>

The actions of the workers and soldiers in support of their demand for an end to the irresponsible behaviour of the Provisional Government, and the determination of some Soviets to come to the assistance of the Petrograd Soviet, again frightened the conciliators. On the morning of April 21 the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet sent telephone messages to the commanders and committees of all troops in Petrograd with instructions for them not to leave their barracks without formal permission signed and sealed by the E.C.<sup>2</sup> In addition, telephone messages were sent to the Soviets and soldiers' committees of Kronstadt, Tsarskoye Syelo, Oranienbaum, Krasnoye Syelo, Gatchina, Peterhof, Pavlovsk, Strelna, Ligovo, Sergiev and Sestroretsk, urgently requesting them "not to send troops and detachments to Petrograd without the direct written invitation of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies".<sup>3</sup>

The S.R. and Menshevik leaders now tried to restrain the people's revolutionary enthusiasm to "calm down democracy". A radio message broadcast on April 21 addressed to local Soviets and Army and Navy committees appealed to them "to refrain from independent actions and to wait calmly for the instructions of the Petrograd Soviet".<sup>4</sup>

The talks between members of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government and State Duma Committee took place on the night of April 25. Prime-Minister Lvov and Ministers Milyukov, Guchkov, Shingaryov and Nekrasov represented the Provisional Government. They spoke of the difficult position which the country found itself in and the intense unrest among the people. The Cadets and Octobrists saw the way out of the crisis in "harnessing the revolution". They wanted the leaders of the Soviet to endorse the Provisional Government's line and threatened them with resignation if "the representatives of democracy" did not make a show of confidence in the Government. This threat had its effect on the Mensheviks and S.R.s. They gave up their efforts to obtain satisfaction of the workers' and soldiers' demand for the cancellation of Milyukov's

Note and contented themselves with an assurance from the Provisional Government that it would publish "an explanation" of certain points in the Note for "internal use", i.e., for the purposes of deceiving the people.<sup>1</sup>

The explanation consisted mostly of an attempt to defend Milyukov and excuse his actions, which were described as the product of "the well-thought out and considered policy of the whole Government". It also contained repetitions of some parts of the March 27 Declaration. It was an answer written for form only and committed nobody to anything but the Mensheviks and the S.R.s nevertheless declared it to be "a great victory for democracy", and hurried to reaffirm their confidence in the Provisional Government.

The Petrograd Soviet E.C. met on April 21 and decided by a majority of 34 to 19 to regard the Provisional Government's "explanation" as satisfactory and the matter of the Milyukov Note closed.<sup>2</sup> This decision was confirmed by a full meeting of the Soviet on the same day. The Mensheviks and S.R.s categorically objected to the transition of power to the Soviets and voted for the E.C. resolution. A. M. Kollontai spoke on behalf of the Bolsheviks. She exposed the behaviour of the S.R.-Menshevik leaders and concluded her vivid speech with the following words: "Take care! Beware of adopting a compromise resolution! We should not form a coalition government. Socialists would be swamped by it. We must rather prepare for the time when power passes to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies."<sup>3</sup> Kollontai also read out the resolution of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) of April 22. This assessed the policy of the S.R.-Menshevik leaders as a profoundly mistaken one which threatened to alienate the Petrograd Soviet from the ranks of the majority of the workers and revolutionary soldiers.<sup>4</sup>

Having refused to break with the bourgeoisie and concentrate all power in its own hands, the Petrograd Soviet broadcast the following message throughout the country: "The overwhelming majority of the Soviet is satisfied with the Government's explanation, and believes it to be necessary to support the Government as before. . . ."<sup>5</sup> This had the force of a directive from the centre to the local S.R.-Menshevik majorities of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Dep-

<sup>1</sup> Pravda, April 25, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Minutes, pp. 117-18 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> L.P.A. (Leningrad Party Archive), File 4000.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 24, pp. 210-12.

<sup>5</sup> The Organisation and Building of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies in 1917, p. 69 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>2</sup> Pravda, April 23, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Izvestia, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, April 22, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

utes everywhere. Most Soviets regarded the "explanation" of Milyukov's Note as satisfactory and came out for continued support for the Cadet-Octobrist Government, making reservations only about the need for "stronger control", sometimes demanding that the Government "give up its aggressive plans".

So the political crisis of April 1917 showed that the question of the organisation of state power remained the central issue in Russian life. The different approaches of the political parties to this question were also clearly revealed by the crisis. The Bolsheviks saw the solution in the further deepening of the Revolution, in the ending of dual power and the handing of full power to the Soviets. While the Mensheviks, the S.R.s and the other petty-bourgeois parties regarded the Revolution as complete and spent their time in trying to come to an agreement with the bourgeoisie, anxious to keep power in the hands of the capitalists and landowners.

The trend among the S.R. and Menshevik leaders to form a coalition government with the Cadets first became apparent at the All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. When the question of the Soviets' attitude towards the Provisional Government came under discussion the conciliators Bramson, Skachkov, Kuchin and others spoke in favour of forming a coalition Government.<sup>1</sup> And now the Cadets too, witnessing the impressive demonstrations of the Petrograd workers, came to realise the necessity of extending their co-operation with the "socialists".

The mass demands of the workers and soldiers for the removal of the Foreign and Defence Ministers finally forced the Provisional Government to agree to the resignation of Milyukov and Guchkov, and Prime-Minister Lvov announced the Government's intention to attract "new public forces" to assist in ruling the country. On April 27 he proposed to the Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, Chkheidze, that talks take place on the possibility of including in the Government people representing "the active creative forces of the country", i.e., members of the Soviet.<sup>2</sup>

The E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet considered Lvov's proposal on May 1. The Mensheviks, S.R.s and Popular Socialists were in favour of a coalition. By a majority of 44 to 19, with 2 abstentions, the E.C. decided that some "socialists" should enter the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks spoke against the coalition with the bourgeoisie.

<sup>1</sup> *The All-Russia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, pp. 125, 141, 143, 161 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, April 28, 1917.

They affirmed that it was "only possible to save the peoples of Russia by taking revolutionary measures", by "transferring all power to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies".<sup>1</sup>

The formation of the first coalition Government was accompanied by the working out of "terms", in just the same way as on March 1. A commission of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet, which consisted of Avksentyev, Bogdanov, Dan, Tsereteli, Chkheidze and others, "presented" their terms: a constructive foreign policy aimed at the speedy conclusion of a universal peace without annexations or indemnities, the democratising of the Army, determined efforts to salvage the economy, protection for labour, an agrarian policy that would pave the way to the transfer of all land to the working peasants, a democratic financial system, the strengthening of local democratic bodies of self-government, and the early convening of a Constituent Assembly.<sup>2</sup> The Provisional Government, representatives of the State Duma Committee and the Central Committee of the Cadet Party in turn made the following demands: 1) that the Soviet of Workers' Deputies refrained from issuing orders on matters that came within the competence of the Government; 2) that the Soviet ceased to behave as an authority in relation to the Army and the Petrograd garrison; 3) that the necessary military strategy be pursued in the war to ensure the success of offensive operations; and 4) that close unity be preserved with the allies in matters of foreign policy, and a peace treaty signed only in agreement with them.<sup>3</sup>

A comparison of the programmes advanced during the April crisis by the Mensheviks and S.R.s on the one hand, and the Cadets on the other, shows that the petty-bourgeois socialists conceived of the social and political transformation of the country only within the framework of the bourgeois system, with all commanding positions remaining in the hands of the capitalists and landowners. Hence, the "terms" advanced by the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet did not come up against any strong opposition from the Provisional Government. The bourgeoisie was prepared to make verbal concessions to "the well-meant dreams" of the conciliators in order to have their own policy implemented in practice—which was to lower the prestige of the Soviets, subordinate them completely to the coalition Government, and so prepare the ground for the establishment of a single bourgeois rule.

<sup>1</sup> *The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Minutes*, pp. 130-31 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, May 3, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> N. Avdeyev, *The 1917 Revolution. A Record of Events*, Vol. II, Moscow, 1923, pp. 100-01 (Russ. ed.).

On May 5 the plenum of the Petrograd Soviet endorsed the decision of the E.C. for some of its members to join the Provisional Government. Lenin regarded this as "a great withdrawal of the Menshevik and Narodnik leaders from the revolution".<sup>1</sup>

Count Lvov remained Prime-Minister of the first coalition Government. The Cadets and the Octobrists occupied the leading posts. The "Socialist Ministers"—Kerensky, Chernov, Tsereteli, Peshekhanov, Skobelev and Pereverzev—claiming to "represent the whole of democracy", served merely as a screen behind which the bourgeoisie could carry through its policies.

This shameful collaboration with the Cadets was presented by the conciliators as "an outstanding victory for democracy". The leader of the Right S.R.s, A. R. Gots, assured Petrograd Soviet deputies that "there need be no apprehension in connection with the socialists joining the coalition Government". He alleged that the Socialist-Revolutionary Chernov was becoming Minister of Agriculture only in order to implement the slogan "Land and Freedom" (!). Tsereteli, Skobelev and Peshekhanov were supposed to be joining the Government for the same purpose. Another leader of the Right S.R.s, N. D. Avksentyev, declared: "The socialists in the Government are those who dictate policy."<sup>2</sup> All this was of course downright hypocrisy. The British Ambassador, J. Buchanan, indicated the true reason for the formation of the coalition Government in his diary of May 21: "The only way to end the double-government anomaly [i.e., dual power.—A. A.] is to set up a coalition." Expressing the imperialist interests of the Entente, he went on: "A new coalition government is our last and only hope of saving the war situation on this front."<sup>3</sup>

The S.R.s and the Mensheviks did their best to show that they appreciated the friendliness shown by the bourgeoisie towards them. The conciliators' majority in the Petrograd Soviet expressed their full confidence in the coalition Government and called on the working people "to render it active support".<sup>4</sup> A conference of joint Menshevik organisations (held May 7-11) declared that the April crisis could have been solved "neither by the seizure of power by the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies nor by the formation of a government without the participation of social-democracy, nor by the passing of the Government into the hands of the extreme Rightist

elements of the bourgeoisie who threaten the country with civil war".<sup>1</sup>

The only party which remained loyal to its duty and which mercilessly exposed the manoeuvres of the conciliators was the Bolshevik Party. A resolution passed by the April Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) said: "The party of the proletariat... gives a resounding 'NO!' to the sending of representatives of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies into a coalition Government."<sup>2</sup>

The Bolsheviks moved a resolution at the May 16 joint meeting of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies which stated that by their joining the Provisional Government the Petrograd Soviet E.C. members "had placed themselves outside the ranks of the fighting world proletariat". This received 160 votes, and it was with great difficulty that the conciliators managed to get a vote of confidence for the coalition Government.<sup>3</sup>

The Yekaterinburg Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies opposed the idea of socialists joining the Provisional Government and called on workers, soldiers and peasants "to rally around their Soviets, and to make ready for the transition of power to the labouring people".<sup>4</sup> Similar resolutions were adopted by the district Soviets of Petrograd and Moscow and by the Soviets of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Riga, Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Kronstadt, Helsingfors and Alexandrov, among others. But the Soviets in Tver, Vyatka, Archangel, Novgorod, Ryazan, Tambov, Orel, Saratov, Kazan, Baku, Odessa, Chernigov, and other places, where the Mensheviks and the S.R.s were in the majority, came out in support of the coalition Government.

Those who protested against the settling of the April political crisis to the disadvantage of the Soviets were for the most part the workers in the big factories of Petrograd, Moscow and other cities. The workers employed at small enterprises and workshops, and the great majority of the soldiers, were infected by the idea of "revolutionary defencism". They supposed that the participation of "the socialists" in the bourgeois Provisional Government would guarantee the ending of the war and the fulfilment of other demands. And the people were to live through several periods of coalitions of Mensheviks, S.R.s and Cadets before it became clear to them how harmful for the advance of the revolution the policy of conciliation was.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Z. Serebryansky, *From Kerensky to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Essays on the History of 1917*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1928, pp. 15-18 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> J. Buchanan, *The Memoirs of a Diplomat*, Moscow, 1925, pp. 220-21 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, May 6, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> C.P.A., I.M.L., File 275.

<sup>2</sup> *The C.P.S.U. in Resolutions*, Part 1, p. 345 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, May 17, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *The Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Revolution in the Urals*, p. 36 (Russ. ed.).

#### 4. RE-ELECTIONS TO THE SOVIETS IN MAY-JUNE 1917. GROWTH IN THE NUMBER AND INFLUENCE OF THE BOLSHEVIK FACTIONS

As the Bolsheviks predicted, the coalition Government made no changes in either home or foreign policy. A statement of the programme of the "new" Ministry published on May 6 contained only vague declarations about "securing an early peace without annexations or reparations", the "ruthless" taxation of the propertied classes, and the like. But this was in fact pure deception. The "socialist ministers" were only embroidering with attractive phraseology the actual intention of the Russian bourgeoisie to pursue the imperialist war together with the Allies to a "victorious conclusion". The programme set targets for strengthening the armed forces "in both defence and attack". In order to rehabilitate the shattered economy it was planned to create organs of "universal control and regulation". A decision on the agrarian question was postponed until the convening of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

Both the composition and the programme of the first coalition Government received the full approval of the petty-bourgeois parties. The 7th All-Russia Conference of Mensheviks called on "revolutionary democracy" to support the Government to the full, to condemn fraternisation at the front, and "to struggle in every way against the unwarranted seizure of land by the peasants".<sup>2</sup> The S.R.s took a similar line. The Third S.R. Party Congress (May 25-June 4) approved the Socialist-Revolutionaries' joining the Government, confirmed the need to bring the Army to a state of full preparedness for battle, asserted the impermissibility of refusing to carry on with the offensive at the front, and urged the importance of obeying the orders of the coalition Government. Following the Mensheviks, the S.R.s also put off the settlement of the land question until a Constituent Assembly had been convened, i.e., indefinitely.<sup>3</sup>

All this suited the capitalists and the landowners perfectly. The 8th Congress of the Cadet Party (May 9-11) expressed the hope that "the entry of the socialists into the Provisional Government will put an end to dual power", i.e., that it would signal the demise of the Soviets and introduce the unrestrained rule of the bourgeoisie.<sup>4</sup> These

hopes of the ruling bourgeois party were not without foundation. The published programme of the first coalition Government had been approved by the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet by a majority of 36 votes to 12.<sup>1</sup> And the plenum of the Moscow Regional Bureau of Soviets had given its support to the "new" Ministry.<sup>2</sup> Similar positions were taken up by the First Urals Regional Congress of Soviets, by the Second Volga Area Congress of Soviets, the Second Congress of Soviets and Representatives of the Armies of the Northern Front (Pskov), and by other congresses and conferences.

All this showed that very many workers, soldiers and peasants still believed in the Mensheviks and the S.R.s. It required great efforts on the part of the working people to overcome their petty-bourgeois illusions, but they were helped in this by the cruel facts of life. The Provisional Government's anti-popular home and foreign policies resulted in a deterioration of the already devastated economy, undermining the country's productive ability and further impoverishing the people. The continuation of the imperialist war strained the country's material resources and physical and spiritual strength to the limit. Eighty-six per cent of all budget allotments for 1917 went on expenditures connected with the war. These expenses were mainly covered by the printing of more paper money. The amount of paper money increased by 14 times during the war and the total amount of money in circulation increased in March 1917 by 1,300 million rubles.<sup>3</sup> The resulting devaluation led, of course, to rocketing prices and speculation and continued failure to meet the deficit in the national budget.

In late March the Provisional Government decided to issue a 5 per cent domestic loan called "The 1917 Liberty Loan". The loan was announced on April 5 and its issue commenced on the same day. The Petrograd Soviet E.C. discussed the attitude of "revolutionary democracy" to this "Liberty Loan" on April 7. The Bolshevik faction spoke against approving the loan on the grounds that to support it would be equivalent to giving a vote of confidence to the coalition Government. But by a majority of 21 to 14, with 5 abstentions, the E.C. gave its support to the loan.<sup>4</sup> Some E.C. members—Bolsheviks and internationalists—protested against this decision and demanded further discussion of the loan in party organisations, at an

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, May 6, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Rabochaya Gazeta* (Workers' Paper), May 9, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the Third Congress of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Stenographic Record, Moscow, 1917, p. 453 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Novaya Zhizn*, May 10 and 13, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, May 6, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, May 5, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The History of the U.S.S.R.*, Moscow, 1958, p. 26 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Minutes*, pp. 89-93 (Russ. ed.).

extended meeting of the E.C. and at a plenary meeting of the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>1</sup>

The Bolshevik faction of the Soviet was the first to hold a detailed discussion of its attitude to the loan. The draft resolution which the Bolsheviks intended to put before the Petrograd Soviet read: "The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies resolutely protests against the so-called 'Liberty Loan' and refuses to support the Provisional Government in its intention to prolong a war that is profitable only to the imperialist bourgeoisie." The resolution went on to say that the Soviet's refusal to support the "Liberty Loan" would constitute a genuinely practical step towards stopping the universally hated war.<sup>2</sup>

The question of the loan was debated once again by the Soviet's E. C. a week later. This time 33 deputies voted for the loan and 16 against it.<sup>3</sup> A full meeting of the Petrograd Soviet on April 22 adopted a Menshevik resolution to support the "Liberty Loan" by an absolute majority of 2,000 votes to 112.<sup>4</sup> This constituted yet another act of betrayal of the working people by the petty-bourgeois leaders. "Having bound themselves hand and foot, the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks have meekly surrendered to the capitalists," Lenin wrote.<sup>5</sup>

The vote by the majority of the Petrograd Soviet for the "Liberty Loan" by no means signified the approval of the proletariat for the Provisional Government's policy. The "Liberty Loan" was supported mainly by the soldiers, among whom the defencist spirit was strong. The behaviour of the Mensheviks and S.R.s in agitating among the workers for subscriptions to the war loan only served to show up the true face and intentions of the petty-bourgeois parties. This was still more strikingly revealed during the debate on the loan at a meeting of the workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet on April 13. Kollontai spoke for the Bolsheviks. She explained to those present the purpose of the loan and the new hardships which the "socialist ministers" were imposing on the labouring people and read out the resolution which the Bolshevik faction had adopted the previous day. The meeting as a whole took the side of the Bolsheviks, but the Mensheviks and the S.R.s declared that they would refuse to vote on

the question because there had been "no judgement on the loan" in the factions (!), and so no vote was taken.<sup>1</sup>

The debate on the loan question in the Petrograd Soviet itself indicated that the mass of the workers were beginning to realise more and more clearly the political meaning of the S.R.-Menshevik policy of class collaboration. The differences between the workers' section of the Soviet and its Executive Committee and Plenum became ever more sharp. At factories the difference in attitude to the "Liberty Loan" between petty-bourgeois elements and true proletarians was still more obvious. It often happened that workers expressed their lack of confidence in deputies who had voted for the loan by replacing them. The workers of the pipe shop of the Putilov Works called a meeting at which they decided not to subscribe to the loan, requiring their deputy to support this decision in the Petrograd Soviet. When it soon became apparent that the will of the meeting was not being heeded the Putilov workers met again and resolved: a) to recall their deputy to the Petrograd Soviet and elect a new one; b) to inform the Peterhof District Soviet of this decision immediately; c) to choose five candidates for the coming elections to the Soviets.<sup>2</sup>

The loan campaign was stormy in Moscow, too. All party factions except the Bolsheviks spoke in support of the loan at the plenum of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies on April 15. P. G. Smidovich (a Bolshevik) made a passionate speech exposing the campaign. "They do not expect money of you," he said, "but an expression of confidence in the Government, for there is no higher expression of confidence than a vote on the budget.... I am deeply convinced that this loan has nothing to do with the cause of defence, since it is not so much the money that they want of you as your seal of confidence...." The S. R.-Menshevik bloc voted for the loan by 242 to 127.<sup>3</sup> But the workers of Moscow followed the Bolsheviks. The Soviet of the Lefortovo District, the "Supplier" factory, the wood workers and other sections of the Moscow proletariat all refused to give their support to the loan.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the distribution of the loan not only revealed the workers' opposition to the bourgeois Provisional Government but also weakened their confidence in the petty-bourgeois parties.

The Bolshevik idea of changing the party composition of the Soviets and directing their work along different channels gained more

<sup>1</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. I, p. 393 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Pravda*, April 12, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, April 23, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 177.

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the History of the October Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 175 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 101.

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, April 17, 20 and 21, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *The Preparations for and the Victory of the October Revolution in Moscow*, p. 86; *Sotsial-Democrat*, Moscow, April 15, 1917 (Russ. eds.).

and more support among the working masses. The Bolsheviks urged the workers and soldiers to send to the Soviets only such deputies as were capable of defending the interests of the people. Wherever deputies were unwilling to express the views of their electors it was recommended that re-elections be held. This call of the Bolsheviks received the enthusiastic support of the workers of Petrograd, Moscow, Saratov, Yekaterinburg and Tsaritsyn, the sailors of Kronstadt and Helsingfors, and the soldiers of certain units of the Army in active service and of the garrisons in the rear.

Workers began re-electing deputies on their own initiative in the districts of Petrograd. By early May the Petrograd Bolsheviks had succeeded in winning over the Soviets of the Vyborg, Vasilyevsky Island and Narva districts.<sup>1</sup> Demands for re-elections to the City Soviet then became more persistent. The E.C. Bureau of the Petrograd Soviet discussed the possibility of holding fresh elections on May 15. The representatives of factories insisted on the holding of general re-elections. The S.R.-Menshevik leaders however reduced this proposal to the setting up of a commission to prepare a draft order on the holding of elections.<sup>2</sup> The conciliators tried to get away with a few minor concessions in order to retain the composition of the Soviets for the most part as they had been since March-April. The meeting of the Bureau of the E.C. held on May 24, which considered the draft presented by the election commission, had in mind only partial elections and not general elections.<sup>3</sup>

The fear of the S.R.s and Mensheviks of losing their control of the Soviets compelled them to speak openly of it in the press. The Petrograd Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* published an article entitled "Re-elections to the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies" which complained that where fresh elections had already been held many factories and army units had sent in new representatives, which, the authors alleged, would "tell badly on the work of the Soviet", and they advised electors "to be cautious". In this way the Mensheviks and S.R.s sought to reject the central principle of a democratic election system—the right of electors to recall their representatives.

In reply to this demagogic article, *Pravda* published an article by Lenin, "One More Departure from Democratic Principles", on May 18. This exposed the partisanship of the article of the conciliators,

who were now beginning to lose the confidence of the electorate. "Is it proper for an official organ to worry about re-elections and to advise 'caution'?... Caution in what? In the expression of popular distrust in *that organ!*" Lenin asked. He went on to explain that unlike the bourgeois parliamentary system, the genuine democracy of the Soviet electoral system must consist first of all in "the right of the population at any time to recall each and every representative, each and every person holding elected office".<sup>4</sup>

The conciliators in the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies managed to have elections temporarily postponed while they worked out an election "instruction". This was composed in such a way as to deprive the most advanced and class-conscious workers of the opportunity to replace quickly deputies who did not live up to the trust placed in them.

Taking advantage of their majority in the Soviets, the S.R.s and Mensheviks often delayed elections and sometimes frustrated them altogether—this happened for example in the Lefortovo-Blagusha and Zamoskvorechye districts of Moscow. But this sabotage and obstruction could not stop the process of renewal of the Soviets that had begun. There was a slow but sure Bolshevisation of the Soviets in the capital and in the localities. 260 new deputies were elected to the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies in May alone, 25 per cent of the whole Soviet, despite the ban of its E.C. There were many Bolsheviks and sympathisers among those elected.<sup>2</sup>

The new elections of deputies to district, city and other Soviets were regarded by the Bolshevik Party as important means of winning the masses to its side. The report of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) to the Sixth Party Congress observed: "In May, all the work of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets was devoted to the re-election campaign."<sup>3</sup>

On April 23 Lenin gave an interview to a correspondent of the newspaper of the Finnish Social-Democrats, E. Torniainen. In this Lenin expressed his belief that the masses would, on the basis of their own experience, move more and more to the Left, voting in the elections for candidates who would be capable of defending, not only in word but in deed, the interests of the working people. He said, "On our part, we (Bolsheviks) are working for influence and a majority in the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and in all the local Soviets."<sup>4</sup>

On May 7, *Pravda* printed a draft "Mandate to Deputies of the

<sup>1</sup> The Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), p. 203 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>3</sup> The Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.). Minutes, p. 14 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 24, p. 222.

Soviet, Elected at Factories and Regiments" based on ideas of Lenin's.<sup>1</sup> Lenin's mandate was discussed by workers at many factories and plants, and Bolshevik Party organisations were guided by it in making up the mandates of deputies to local Soviets.

The Bolsheviks in the capital began to work energetically to win a majority in the Petrograd Soviet and in the district Soviets, basing their work on Lenin's "Draft Mandate". The Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and the district Party organisations paid special attention to those places of work where the petty-bourgeois parties had acquired the most influence, sending their best propagandists and agitators there. Sverdlov, Lunacharsky, Volodarsky, Chudnovsky and other orators repeatedly spoke at the Vulkan Factory, the Rechkin works, and the Skorokhod footwear factory.

The Bolshevik agitation had its effect. In early June a pre-election meeting took place at the Vulkan Factory, attended by 3,500 workers, who expressed their lack of confidence in their Menshevik deputies and demanded their recall. Bolsheviks and a small number of members of the joint Bolshevik-Menshevik organisation were elected to replace the Mensheviks in the Petrograd Soviet. The meeting approved the Bolsheviks' mandate and authorised their delegates to work for the transfer of full power to the Soviets.<sup>2</sup> The workers of the Skorokhod footwear factory elected five Bolsheviks and one Menshevik in place of six non-party people.<sup>3</sup> And the Ericson Factory workers decided unanimously not to replace any of the Bolshevik deputies they had elected.<sup>4</sup>

Lenin's speeches had a particularly great effect on the broad masses. In May and June he spoke more than 20 times at meetings, congresses and conferences, sometimes two or three times a day.<sup>5</sup> For example, on May 17 he spoke at a meeting at the Polytechnical Institute, and then at a workers' pre-election meeting of the pipe factory and other factories of the Vasilyevsky Island District.<sup>6</sup> The meeting at the pipe factory was organised by the S.R.s and the Mensheviks, who held almost all the seats on the factory's committee. To strengthen their position further they invited three Provisional Government Ministers to the factory—Tereshchenko, Skobelev and Peshekhonov. The Bolsheviks were prepared for this event. Slutskaya,

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> *Pravda*, June 17, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. II, p. 259 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, p. 116 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> *Lenin in 1917. His Life and Work*, Moscow, 1957, pp. 52-64 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

secretary of the Vasilyevsky Island District Party Committee, asked Lenin to speak.

Lenin severely criticised the policies of the capitalist Ministers and of the conciliators in the Petrograd Soviet. "Our political adversaries here have proposed carrying on the war to a victorious end, together with the allies—France and Britain. The working class won't do that. The proletariat's task is to expropriate the exploiters. The slogan must be: 'All the land to the peasants and the factories to the workers.' No, comrades, we do not need war...."<sup>1</sup> Lenin spoke for a long time, about two hours. He finished his speech to the stormy applause of all those present. This speech of Lenin's produced a change in the mood of the workers at the factory and they began to listen more carefully to the Bolsheviks' agitation. The Bolsheviks won 14 seats on the factory committee at elections held later in May and sent seven Bolsheviks to the Petrograd Soviet. Only three "war-defenders" were now elected to the factory committee and one to the Soviet. Almost the same situation existed at the Baltiisky Works, and at the Treugolnik Factory 13 Bolsheviks were elected out of a total of 17 deputies, compared to three Mensheviks.

The Bolsheviks, and the internationalists who supported them, were also very successful in the re-elections to the Vasilyevsky Island District Soviet: the Bolshevik E. Essen replaced the Menshevik F. Yakovlev as chairman, and the Bolsheviks won in all 9 seats out of 15 on the E.C.<sup>2</sup>

The Bolsheviks struggled for six weeks against an alliance of the petty-bourgeois parties to conduct elections to the E.C. of the First City District Soviet. After the election had taken place, the S.R.s and the Mensheviks complained to the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet that the Bolsheviks had allegedly involved outsiders in the voting. An investigation committee was appointed and fresh elections called. These took place on May 27 by roll-call vote, but the defencists again sustained a great defeat, with two Bolsheviks being elected to the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>3</sup>

In the factories of the Vyborg District almost all those elected to the district Soviet were Bolsheviks. At a full meeting of the Vyborg District Soviet late in May the old Party member N. O. Kuchmenko was elected Chairman and the Bolsheviks I. D. Chugurin, I. M. Gordienko, V. P. Shunyakov, A. A. Yurkin and other members of the E.C.

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections of Petrograd Bolsheviks of Party Work in 1917*, L.P.A., File 4000.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, p. 116 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The District Soviets of Petrograd in 1917*, Vol. I, pp. 192-94 (Russ. ed.).

S. M. Nakhimson, a well-known Bolshevik Party worker, became Chairman of the First City District Soviet, and A. K. Skorokhodov, also a Bolshevik, Chairman of the Petrograd District Soviet. In the Narva District the Bolsheviks received 60 per cent of the votes, and the S.R.s 15 per cent. The Bolshevik I. G. Yegorov was elected Chairman of the district Soviet and N. K. Antipov, a member of the executive commission of the Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), secretary and leader of the Bolshevik faction in the Soviet.<sup>1</sup> So now five of Petrograd's district Soviets followed the Bolsheviks.

The partial re-elections resulted in changes in the composition of the Petrograd City Soviet. The Bolsheviks won about a half of the seats in the workers' section and more than a quarter in the soldiers' section during May and June.<sup>2</sup> This had a positive effect on the work of the Soviet. The workers' section adopted a Bolshevik resolution for the first time on May 31 protesting against the Provisional Government's plan to "clear" Petrograd of its revolutionary proletariat, and demanding the transfer of all power to the Soviets.<sup>3</sup>

In Moscow the election campaign was also a success for the Bolsheviks. On May 23-24 the Moscow City Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) called a meeting of secretaries of Party district committees to exchange experiences of organisational and political work at which it was noted that Moscow's Bolshevik organisations had become much stronger in the three months since the February Revolution and had greatly increased their influence in the Soviets. The Soviets of the Gorodskoi, Lefortovo, Rogozhsky and Zheleznodorozhny districts in the main supported the Bolsheviks. Re-elections of deputies in the Presnya District had been held on the initiative of the S.R.s and Mensheviks but the workers rejected their candidates. In the Zamoskvorechye, Butyrsky and Sokolniki districts re-elections took place at individual factories and the Bolsheviks were again victorious. To consolidate their success the Moscow Bolsheviks now began to form their own factions in the district Soviets.

Ignoring the resistance of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s the workers conducted elections to the Moscow City Soviet on their own, considerably altering its composition. On June 1, 205 of the 625 delegates to the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and a proportionate number, i.e., about 30 per cent of the members of the E.C., were Bolsheviks.<sup>4</sup>

In other industrial centres and in workers' settlements there were

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of P. Kulinenkov*, L.P.A., File 4000.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.). Minutes*, p. 14, (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, June 2, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, June 17, 1917.

even bigger changes in the composition of the Soviets than in Petrograd and Moscow. This confirmed Lenin's observation that the Revolution was advancing more rapidly in the non-metropolitan areas than in the capital. In May the Bolsheviks received 90 seats in the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Soviet out of 100. Elections were held in Gus-Khrustalny on the initiative of the S.R.s and Mensheviks but the Bolsheviks got 12 out of the 22 seats on the Soviet and formed a faction in it.

In Alexandrov (Vladimir Gubernia) Bolsheviks and internationalists won a big victory in securing the resignation of the former presidium of the Soviet and its Menshevik chairman. There were also elections in early May to the whole of the Kostroma Soviet of Workers' Deputies in which the Bolsheviks strengthened their position, winning three quarters of the seats on the executive committee.

General and partial re-elections were held in many cities of the Urals, the Volga Area, the Ukraine, the Baltic Area and other parts of the country throughout May and June, usually resulting in considerable advances for the Bolsheviks.

In Yekaterinburg the demand for re-elections came from the S.R.-Menshevik bloc. Exploiting their dominant position in the local garrison the S.R.s spread hostile propaganda among the soldiers against the Bolsheviks in the Yekaterinburg Soviet. Under pressure from the conciliators the Executive Committee of the Soviet decided to hold general re-elections of deputies from both workers and soldiers. The S.R.s, Mensheviks, Cadets and their non-party followers combined together in an effort to isolate the Bolsheviks, but their plan did not succeed. The workers of the biggest factories approved at pre-election meetings Lenin's draft mandate to deputies and elected Bolsheviks and people representing groups supporting the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) election platform. The workers of the Verkhny Isset Metallurgical Works elected 25 deputies including 17 Bolsheviks, and the 1,800 workers of the Makarov Works 16 Bolsheviks and internationalists who backed them. The 1,000 workers of the Mint and the 800 workers of the Railway Depot and other workplaces voted in a similar way. S.R.s and defencist Mensheviks got their mandates mainly from office employees and handicraftsmen, with only a section of factory workers voting for them. 95 Bolsheviks were elected to the 160-strong workers' section of the Yekaterinburg Soviet and the number of Bolshevik deputies in the soldiers' section was increased threefold.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Uralskaya Pravda*, May 26, 1917; *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in May-June 1917. The June Demonstration*, pp. 203 and 597 (Russ. eds.).

The conciliators' majority in the Saratov Soviet passed a motion of confidence in the first coalition Government. This aroused the great dissatisfaction of the electors. Factory and office workers of the city's largest machine plant, the Titanic Works, declared the Soviet's decision to be erroneous because the Soviet "did not represent completely the masses of the workers and the soldiers", and that fresh elections were therefore necessary.<sup>1</sup> Elections were held late in May; the returns were: 85 seats to the Bolsheviks in the workers' section (more than twice the March figure), 70 to the Mensheviks and 46 to the S.R.s<sup>2</sup>

Partial re-elections to the Tsaritsyn Soviet were held in June. The Bolsheviks were active in this campaign. The Tsaritsyn Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) reported: "Our faction in the Soviet is raising the question of the election rules. Simultaneously the comrades in the localities must begin to work for the organisation of systematic fresh elections to replace those members of the Soviet whose work is contrary to the will of the electorate." After these elections about half the delegates to the Tsaritsyn Soviet were united in the Bolshevik faction.<sup>3</sup>

Wherever the petty-bourgeois parties were in the majority in the executive committees of Soviets they strove to retain the undemocratic rules for electing deputies which they had imposed on the workers and the soldiers at the start of the Revolution. In the May elections in Samara, for instance, the principle of proportional representation was not observed. Small enterprises sent deputies to the Soviet on the same basis as the big factories where Bolshevik influence was strong. But such serious breaches of democracy did not always bring the Mensheviks and the S.R.s the effects they desired. At the Samara pipe factory the Bolsheviks received 42 per cent of the total vote. And Samara workers elected Bolsheviks V. V. Kuibyshev, N. M. Shvernik, P. G. Galaktionov, S. I. Deryabina and others to the City Soviet. 10 Bolsheviks, 11 Mensheviks and 9 S.R.s entered the E.C. of the Soviet from the workers' section. Kuibyshev was elected Chairman of the Samara Soviet for the second time.<sup>4</sup> In late May the Bolsheviks

won the workers' section of the Syzran Soviet and also strengthened their positions in the soldiers' section.<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviks' active struggle against the conciliators and their exposure of the Provisional Government's anti-popular policy brought them increasing influence in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the national areas. The Bolsheviks of Byelorussia were among the first to get fresh elections held—to the Executive Committee of the Minsk Soviet. In this connection the Moscow newspaper *Sotsial-Demokrat* reported: "A conflict arose between the S.R.s and the Social-Democrats during the elections to the Executive Committee of the Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies which ended in the S.R.s leaving the meeting, but the elections nevertheless took place. Those elected were mainly Bolsheviks and internationalists."<sup>2</sup> The presidium of the E.C. was now composed of four Bolsheviks and one S.R., and the Social-Democratic faction's bureau consisted entirely of Bolsheviks. B. P. Pozern was again elected Chairman of the Minsk Soviet and Bolshevik I. Y. Lyubimov deputy chairman. V. G. Knorin, also a Bolshevik, was elected secretary. There was a 30-strong Bolshevik faction in the Gomel Soviet by the end of May and Bolshevik groups had been organised in the Vitebsk, Orsha and other Soviets.<sup>3</sup>

In the cities and workers' townships of the Baltic the Bolsheviks did not have a majority in the Soviets but under the pressure of the revolutionary people local Soviets came out actively against the Provisional Government's anti-popular behaviour and tried to get its supporters removed. The workers of the largest factory in Estonia, the Volta plant, expressed their dissatisfaction with the policy of the S.R.s, who made up the majority in the Revel Soviet, and held fresh elections at the plant on June 5 in which three S.R.s were replaced by Bolsheviks.<sup>4</sup>

In the Ukraine the new elections altered the party composition of the Soviets not only in the towns and miners' settlements of the Donbas but in Kiev, Yekaterinoslav, Kharkov and Odessa too, where the petty-bourgeois parties were particularly strong. Early in July a City Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) took place in Kiev at which

<sup>1</sup> 1917 in *Saratov Gubernia*, Collection of Articles, Saratov, 1927, p. 96 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Borba* (Struggle), Tsaritsyn, May 30, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, June 1, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Documents and Materials on the History of Byelorussia*, Vol. III, Minsk, 1953, p. 866; *The History of the B.S.S.R.*, Vol. II, pp. 22-23 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in May-June 1917. The June Demonstration*, p. 205 (Russ. ed.).

the work of the Bolshevik factions in the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Army Deputies was discussed. This Conference decided to begin a campaign for new elections. At that time the Bolsheviks held 90 seats in the Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies, 30 per cent more than in March-April.<sup>1</sup>

The changes in party composition that resulted from the elections were reflected in the decisions of the congresses and conferences of the local Soviets that were held during May and June 1917. The Third Congress of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies of Moscow Gubernia took place between May 25 and 27 in Moscow. The delegates elected comrade I. S. Veger, a prominent worker of the Moscow District Party organisation, as chairman. Bolshevik proposals were adopted on nearly all the items on the agenda. The congress resolution on its attitude to the coalition Government stated that the Government did not protect the interests of revolutionary democracy; only the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies expressed the will of the people and therefore only they should possess state power.<sup>2</sup>

The First Yekaterinburg area congress of Soviets was held between June 9 and 14 with representatives from Yekaterinburg, Verkhnaya Tura, Kamyshlov, Shadrinsk, part of Krasnoufimsk uyezds (Perm Gubernia), and Troitsk and Chelyabinsk uyezds (Orenburg Gubernia) participating. Of the 106 delegates, representing 200,000 people, 56 were Bolsheviks, 36 S.R.s, 13 Mensheviks and 11 non-party people.<sup>3</sup> The congress convincingly proved that the Urals working class was vigorously struggling to transform their Soviets into true organs of revolutionary power. After a long and comprehensive debate the Bolsheviks' resolutions were adopted calling for workers' control of industry and finance, an 8-hour working day, a minimum wage, and other demands. Leading Bolsheviks I. M. Malyshev, S. M. Tsvilling, A. Lepa and Y. S. Sheinkman joined the Executive Committee of the Yekaterinburg area Soviet.<sup>4</sup>

But not everywhere were the changes in the party composition of the delegates to congresses of Soviets as marked as in the industrial centres of the Moscow region and the Yekaterinburg area. Many

<sup>1</sup> *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata* (The Voice of the Social-Democrat), July 6, 9, 12 and 23, 1917; *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. II, p. 231 (Russ. ed.); see also Table 1, p. 52 of this book.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, May 30 and 31, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Uralskaya Pravda*, May 26, June 1, 7 and 10, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, June 22, 1917; *The Bolsheviks of the Urals in the Struggle for the Victory of the October Socialist Revolution*, pp. 84-89 and 389 (Russ. ed.).

congresses and conferences (those of the Western, Semirechye<sup>1</sup> regions and the Volga Area) expressed confidence in the first coalition Government, adopted defencist resolutions, and supported the "Liberty Loan".

There were also changes in the composition of the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies and in the soldiers' sections of joint Soviets. Within the Moscow Military District, the soldiers' Soviets of Vladimir, Tver and Tula followed the Bolsheviks, and in the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies of the Moscow garrison the Bolsheviks had secured a third of the seats by late July.<sup>2</sup> The Bolsheviks in Siberia held the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies of the Tomsk garrison (in the Omsk Military District) and the Krasnoyarsk and Kansk Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the Irkutsk Military District.

The All-Russia Conference of Front-line and Rear Organisations of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), called by the Organisational Bureau of the Military Organisation of the Party's Central Committee and held in Petrograd from June 16 to 23, was of the greatest importance in helping to win over the soldiers and to stimulate the work of the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies and the company, battalion, regimental and other committees. 48 front-line organisations and 17 from the rear, covering about 500 individual army units, were represented at the conference. 26,000 Bolsheviks in the Army sent their 107 delegates from the various fronts and from many cities.<sup>3</sup>

Lenin participated in the work of the conference. He read the two main papers, one on the current situation and one on the land question. The situation in the country was tense at this time. The strain of the war and the economic dislocation had made some of the soldiers "impatient" and they wanted to "seize power as soon as possible". But Lenin explained to them that the mass of the people still had faith in the conciliators and that the latter still held the majority in the Soviets. It was therefore necessary to persist with the steady and patient exposure of the policy of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s.<sup>4</sup>

While continuing to rally the workers and the soldiers around the Soviets the Bolshevik Party also paid constant attention to its work

<sup>1</sup> Semirechye is a historical geographical area to the south-east of Lake Balkhash on the territory of the present-day Kazakh and Kirghiz Socialist Republics.

<sup>2</sup> *The Preparation for and the Victory of the October Revolution in Moscow*, p. 225 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> A. M. Ionov, *The Struggle of the Bolshevik Party to Win Over the Soldiers of the Petrograd Garrison in 1917*, Moscow, 1954, p. 79 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; *Reminiscences of L. G. Khanin, I.P.A.*, File 4000.

among the peasants, to creating an alliance between the city workers and the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements of the countryside. The associations of fellow-countrymen from among the peasants in the workers', soldiers' and sailors' organisations of Petrograd, Kronstadt, Helsingfors and other cities that had emerged in the spring and summer of 1917 did much work in this respect in the countryside. Special peasants' sections were set up in joint Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The sections of peasants also existed among soldiers in reserve regiments and among troops in active service. Independent Soviets of Peasants' (Soldiers') Deputies were set up in April, May and June in certain rear garrisons (Petrograd, Kronstadt, Sevastopol, Simferopol and others).

Guided by the decisions of the April Conference Bolshevik organisations successfully united farm workers and the poorest sections of the peasantry around the Soviets. On the initiative of the North Baltic Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) an All-Estonia Committee of Landless Peasants was set up.<sup>1</sup> On April 16 the landless peasants of Latvia gathered in the town of Valmiere for a congress which decided that it was of vital importance for them to set up in every volost a landless peasants' Soviet linked organisationally to the Riga Soviet of Workers' Deputies.<sup>2</sup>

In the Ukraine there were sections, bureaus or departments of agricultural workers in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and in district and city Bolshevik committees. Byelorussian Bolsheviks held poor peasants' meetings in the villages and formed Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies.

The peasants' growing political awareness manifested itself in the creation of joint Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. In the spring of 1917 such Soviets existed in Voronezh, Novgorod, Kazan and other cities. In most gubernias the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies maintained contacts with peasants' Soviets by holding joint meetings of their executive committees. During the first half of 1917 the union of the peasants' Soviets with the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies remained in a rudimentary state. It could not assume a mass scale because the majority in the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies belonged to the S.R.s, whose line was to isolate the rural areas from the influence of the urban proletariat. The Right S.R. leader V. M. Chernov described the striving of the workers, soldiers and peasants to link up their Soviets as "a harmful

tendency" which would lead to "a mixed, mottled type of organisation".<sup>1</sup>

The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies was held in Petrograd from May 4 to 28. It was decided at the congress that the Soviet form was the best form of political organisation for the peasants, but following the instructions of the S.R. leaders it was also decided that the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies should exist apart from the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. This was the central concept of the "Constitution of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies" adopted by the congress.<sup>2</sup> The congress also elected the Executive Committee of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, with the Right S.R.s receiving most of the seats.

The May-June re-elections and the rapid spreading of the Soviet form of political organisation of working people to the Army and the countryside were important steps in the realisation of Lenin's policy of following the peaceful path of development of the Revolution. The Bolsheviks succeeded in increasing the size of their factions and in deepening their influence in the Soviets of the capital and throughout the country. But the conciliators remained very strong, and their wavering and final going over to the side of the bourgeoisie were preventing the proletariat from uniting all the democratic forces of the people, abolishing dual power and replacing it by a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship in the shape of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.

##### 5. THE FIRST ALL-RUSSIA CONGRESS OF SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES. THE FORMATION OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE SOVIETS

The All-Russia Conference of Soviets had entrusted the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet with the task of convening the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies not later than April 26, and to make all the necessary preparations for it. The Congress of Soviets was to consider the most burning issues of home and foreign policy, its attitude to the Provisional Government and the organisation of power, the questions of war and peace, of

<sup>1</sup> *The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Shorthand Records, Vol. 1, Moscow-Leningrad, 1930, p. 108 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Organisation of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and Directives to the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies*, Petrograd, 1917 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> *Krasnaya Letopis* No. 5-6, 1933, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> T. Y. Draudin, "The Latvian Peasantry in the Struggle for Soviet Power", *Historical Notes*, Vol. 51, p. 58 (Russ. ed.).

overcoming the economic devastation, and the land, food and money questions. It was also to elect a Central Executive Committee.<sup>1</sup>

Before the Congress the Bolsheviks were forced to engage in a bitter struggle against the S.R.s, the Menshevik defencists and the other petty-bourgeois parties in order to defend their right to be represented at the highest Soviet forum.

Delegates were elected to the All-Russia Congress by the regional, area and district congresses of Soviets and by the Soviets of big cities. The Petrograd Soviet had 150 delegates, who were for the most part S.R.s and Mensheviks, but the Bolsheviks managed to send 15 or 16 representatives.<sup>2</sup>

The Congress of Soviets of Workers' Deputies of the central area of the Donbas elected two Bolsheviks as delegates, and this was supported by the overwhelming majority of the miners. But the Menshevik leadership of the Gorlovka Soviet objected to the returns of the election and elected a third delegate, a Menshevik, at a general meeting of the Soviet. This angered many workers, who left the meeting before the vote, protesting against the partial, one-sided conduct of the meeting in the interests of one faction.<sup>3</sup>

At a joint meeting of the Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies the S.R.-Menshevik bloc proposed sending 14 candidates to the All-Russia Congress, none of them Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik faction protested against this, demanded proportional representation and then left the meeting. The deputies who remained elected 7 candidates nominated by the defencists. The Bolsheviks then raised the question with the E.C. of the Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies, pointing out that the delegates had been elected by less than a third of the deputies representing Kiev's workers and soldiers and that the election results should be declared null and void. But the E.C. rejected the Bolsheviks' protest by 17 votes to 10 and upheld the results of the election.<sup>4</sup> Two Mensheviks and two S.R.s were sent as delegates to the Congress from the Kiev Soviet.

The election of delegates to the All-Russia Congress was also the occasion of intense struggles in the towns of the Volga Area. The Tsaritsyn Soviet elected one Bolshevik and two Mensheviks and the Astrakhan Soviet two S.R.s; uyezd Soviets sent mainly S.R.s and Mensheviks.

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, May 9, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> A. Druzhkova, *The Bolshevikisation of the Petrograd Soviet (February-October 1917)*, Leningrad, 1948, p. 198 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in May-June 1917. The June Demonstration*, pp. 170-71, 594 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata*, Kiev, May 31, 1917.

By means of demagogic, faked election results, and the exploitation of the people's feelings of patriotism, the petty-bourgeois parties managed to have their candidates elected to the All-Russia Congress even from Soviets which supported the Bolsheviks on many points. For example, the Helsingfors Soviet of Army, Navy and Workers' Deputies was represented by three S.R.s, and the Nikolayev Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies by two S.R.s and one Menshevik defencist.<sup>1</sup>

The total number of delegates who arrived at the Congress was 1090, 822 with full voting rights, the remainder attending in a consultative capacity. They represented 305 Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, 53 regional, gubernia and district associations of Soviets, 21 organisations from the front lines, eight from the rear, and five Navy organisations. The Soviets and the peasants', soldiers' and sailors' committees together represented the vast majority of the population and were therefore entitled to full state power.

777 delegates declared their party allegiance. These comprised 105 Bolsheviks, 285 S.R.s, 248 Mensheviks, 32 internationalists and 10 members of the *Unity* group, the rest being attached to various small groupings and factions.<sup>2</sup> There were five Bolsheviks among the 23 members of the presidium. Y. M. Sverdlov described the composition of the Congress as follows: "Delegates that have come to the Congress make up our faction of 120-130 people. About 20 group themselves around Trotsky, Lunacharsky, etc., and another 35 or 40 are waverers. The S.R. faction is some 200-strong and the Mensheviks have about the same number, but both are divided into Right, Left and Centre. The S.R.s have a strong Left, over two-fifths, which is inclined to back our resolutions. The Mensheviks' Left follows Martov but they are only 15 or 20 in number."<sup>3</sup>

Thus the Bolsheviks had a comparatively small group of representatives at the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets, less than a sixth of all the participants. But they represented the most revolutionary classes of the people, and were welded together by a single will and a single programme of action under the leadership of Lenin. It was therefore not surprising that even the Cadets observed that there was "an enormous explosive power" in the Bolshevik faction, though small in number.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, pp. 258, 314 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Vol. 2, Moscow-Leningrad, 1931, p. 10 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, p. 166 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Russkiye Uedomosti*, June 8, 1917.

The first matters to be debated by the All-Russia Congress were its attitude to the Provisional Government and the question of the organisation of power. The Menshevik M. I. Lieber read a paper in which he defended the capitulation of the Petrograd Soviet leaders during the April crisis and the entry of members of the Soviet's E.C. into the first coalition Cabinet. Flying in the face of the facts Lieber claimed that "the Soviets were unable to take power in either March or April, or later". Tsereteli spoke next. He defended the measures which the Provisional Government had taken to prepare the Army for offensive operations and the shameful part that the conciliators had played in this. Trying to frighten the delegates with stories of "the terrible things" that awaited the country in the event of the liberal bourgeoisie deserting the revolution, Tsereteli constantly repeated that there was no political party in Russia that would agree to take full power alone, without the bourgeoisie. At this moment Lenin's voice was to be heard from the hall: "Yes, there is!"<sup>1</sup>

Lenin, in his speech at the congress, enlarged on the fact that a political party did exist ready to take power. Speaking on the Provisional Government, he mercilessly exposed the demagogic of the Mensheviks and S.R.s, pointed to the real cause of the economic dislocation and the political crises, and indicated how to overcome them. Contrary to the Mensheviks and S.R.s, who restricted themselves to demanding an ordinary parliamentary republic, Lenin asserted that the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia had already advanced far beyond what was "ordinary". . . . Soviets of Deputies had been formed everywhere and it had become possible to create a new, more democratic type of state—a Republic of Soviets. Lenin said that the existing dual power was intolerable because it had generated and would continue to generate serious political crises. Friction and power struggles between the parties were inevitable in the All-Russia Soviet itself, too, but that, as Lenin said, would result in "the elimination of possible mistakes and illusions through the political experience of the masses themselves".<sup>2</sup>

Lenin declared that the Bolshevik Party was prepared to take power alone, and to carry out, through the Soviets, the programme of economic and political transformations outlined by the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.). He laid particular emphasis on the fact that "in Russia there is no group, no class,

that would resist the power of the Soviets". And therefore it was possible, under such conditions, for the revolution to advance peacefully, without resort to armed struggle.<sup>1</sup>

Lenin's vivid and persuasive speech was listened to by the delegates with great attention. Kerensky, Skobelev, Chernov, Dan and the other defencists who spoke after Lenin heaped torrents of abuse on the Bolsheviks in an effort to prove that Lenin's slogan "All power to the Soviets!" was not realisable. The S.R.-Menshevik bloc rejected the Bolshevik resolution calling for the transfer of power to the Soviets and instead the Congress approved the conciliators' motion of confidence in the coalition Government.

The Congress became stormy when the question of the war came under discussion. There was a clash between two diametrically opposed political lines: the Bolsheviks' line of ending the war through socialist revolution and the defencist line of the Mensheviks and S.R.s.

The question of the coming offensive of the Russian Army was also discussed by the All-Russia Congress. This question already had a certain history. On April 30 a full meeting of the Petrograd Soviet had approved "An Appeal to the Army". Tsereteli made a speech in which he explained the need for such an appeal. He claimed that while the All-Russia Conference of Soviets had adopted a resolution on its attitude to the war, this was "not clear" to the soldiers. The Soviets' actions, he said, should be guided not by strategy but by politics, though that could not, maintained this ideologist of Russian Social-Chauvinism, be interpreted to mean "Don't attack!"<sup>2</sup> The Appeal was in the same vein. It disguised the imperialist nature of the war and put off a peace settlement indefinitely, urging on the soldiers the necessity of waging an offensive "to defend the revolution".<sup>3</sup> Lenin observed that this unfortunate document represented "a further defection of the Soviet's leaders, the Narodniks and Mensheviks, to the side of the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie".<sup>4</sup>

Encountering strong criticism when the Appeal was being discussed, the conciliators felt it necessary to "calm down" public opinion. The minutes of a meeting of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet on June 6 contained the following confidential instruction: "Inform Kerensky that it [the E.C. of the Soviet.—A. A.] would consider it inexpedient to issue the orders for the offensive before a decision has

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> F. P. Matveyev, op. cit., p. 109 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Rabochaya Gazeta* (The Workers' Newspaper), May 2, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 343.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

been taken by the Congress of Soviets on this question.”<sup>1</sup> But in reality the conciliators were active in preparing for the offensive. They felt certain that the All-Russia Congress of Soviets would sanction the Provisional Government’s decision and would cover with its authority the shameful deeds of the “socialist Ministers”. The speeches of Kerensky, Chkhheidze, Dan, Tsereteli and others were therefore designed to get this sanction.

The Bolsheviks called for the Congress to open with a debate on the offensive. On June 4 at a plenary session of the Congress a statement was read on behalf of the Bolsheviks jointly with the social-democratic internationalists: “the Congress cannot overlook this overt and carefully organised blow against the international revolutionary struggle for peace, a blow against the gains and positions of Russian democracy. The Congress must repulse immediately the counter-revolutionary assault for which the offensive is clearing the way, or else take responsibility for it. We warn the working class, the Army and the peasantry of the threat hanging over the nation and insist that this issue be placed first on the Congress agenda.”<sup>2</sup>

The representatives of the factions of the petty-bourgeois parties refused to support the Bolsheviks’ demand. In this atmosphere it became very important to expose the false claims of the conciliators concerning the strategic, exclusively military nature of the offensive, the possibility of securing peace “by calling a conference of the socialists of the belligerent nations”, and so on. Lenin exposed all these false claims without delay. On June 9 he spoke again at the Congress on the question of the war. He explained that no manifestos, appeals or declarations would be able to stop the war. The issue of peace was closely and directly tied up with the fate of the revolution. When the second bourgeois-democratic revolution began in Russia the struggle from below for peace had become intense. If the Soviets had taken power in their hands then and had offered a just and democratic peace to the peoples of the fighting nations in the name of a revolutionary workers’ and peasants’ government the bloodshed would have ended and the cause of freedom guaranteed. It’s futile to call upon other nations to “refuse to serve as tools of conquest and violence in the hands of kings, landowners and bankers” and at the same time help the Provisional Government wage an imperialist war. The fight against this war can only be a fight of the revolutionary

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Petrograd Soviet E.C., June 6, 1917. S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>2</sup> The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, Vol. 1, p. 43 (Russ. ed.).

classes against the ruling classes. Hence, assumption of power by the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies is the one and only way of putting end to the war.<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviks proposed that the All-Russia Congress of Soviets take power into its hands in order to bring the imperialist war to a rapid end, save the country’s freedom and establish a lasting peace.<sup>2</sup> But the majority at the congress rejected the Bolshevik draft resolution and voted for the Menshevik-S.R. resolution. This contained high-sounding words about revolutionary democracy struggling for “the early conclusion of the war”, appealing to the Provisional Government “to speed up the revision of the treaties with the Allies”, and so on. The issue of the offensive at the front was treated in the resolution exclusively as a question of strategy. This gave the Provisional Government and its War Minister the right to resume hostilities at any time they saw fit.<sup>3</sup>

The workers and soldiers stationed in Petrograd followed closely all that was going on in Taurida Palace, where the Congress was being held. There was growing dissatisfaction with the coalition Government’s policy, and numerous resolutions were sent to the Congress daily from mass meetings and gatherings of workers, soldiers and sailors, who continued to demand the transfer of all power to the Soviets.

Simultaneously the counter-revolution was mustering its forces. The bourgeoisie mounted a slanderous campaign against the Bolsheviks. Its mouthpiece, the newspaper *Novoye Vremya* (New Times) urged the smashing of Bolshevik-led workers’ organisations. The Menshevik and S.R. newspapers, and Plekhanov’s paper *Yedinstvo* and the like, echoed *Novoye Vremya* in this campaign. Under the protection of the Government and the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet, reactionary military organisations flourished in the capital—“The Army League”, “The Republican Centre”, “The Union of Warriors”, “The Knights of St. George”, “The Union of the Motherland”, and others. Meetings of officers, cadets, holders of the Order of St. George, etc., were called. Using the slogan of democratising the Army as a cloak, they mobilised all counter-revolutionary forces, i.e., they united everyone who stood for the continuation of the war.

While the All-Russia Congress of Soviets was in progress in Petrograd a General Congress of Cossacks also met there under the chair-

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, pp. 29-42.

<sup>2</sup> The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, Vol. 2, p. 15 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 12 (Russ. ed.).

manship of the Cossack chieftain General A. I. Dutov. Rodzyanko, Milyukov and the "socialist" Kerensky took part in its proceedings. These gentlemen made speeches that were imbued with the spirit of militarism and which were designed to fan the flames of the anti-Bolshevik and anti-workers' campaign. The Cossack congress expressed its full confidence in the Provisional Government and called for a decisive military offensive at the front.<sup>1</sup>

The Provisional Government, which relied on the reactionary officers and Cossacks, now opened an attack on the democratic rights that had been won by the soldiers. The Government dissolved those regiments that had taken an active part in the revolution, and the Minister for the Army and Navy, Kerensky, signed an order on May 11 restricting the basic rights of men in military service which the soldiers dubbed the "Declaration of Rightlessness".<sup>2</sup> This gave unlimited powers to officers and introduced penal servitude for anti-war activities at the front lines.<sup>3</sup> This led to unrest among the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison, who wanted to go out onto the streets in protest against the Provisional Government's anti-democratic actions. The crumbling of the national economy, rocketing prices, the inability of the Government to protect workers from lock-outs, and the alarming rumours that were coming in about the position at the front, increased the tension in the capital. An act of violence perpetrated by the Provisional Government on the night of June 6-7 led to mass revolutionary action on the part of the Petrograd proletariat. On the orders of the "socialist" Minister of Law P. N. Pereverzhev, a group of armed men surrounded the one-time country residence of the former tsarist high official Durnovo and raided the Vyborg District trade union organisation which had set up office there, along with the workers' club Prosvet. They also evicted the Anarchist Federation from the building. This act of violence of the Government exhausted the patience of the working people of the capital. The workers of the Baranovsky factory regarded the Government's action as counter-revolutionary and provocative, and demanded that the Soviets immediately take power—"since such raids will be inevitable as long as the Government of Count Lvov and the capitalist Tere-shchenko holds power". The Metal Plant workers elected a commission to go to Taurida Palace to demand protection for the liberties already gained in the revolution. Four factories struck on June 7 and

<sup>1</sup> *The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Vol. 1, p. 427 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Uestnik Uremennogo Pravitelstva*, May 14, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in May-June 1917. The June Demonstration*, p. 243 (Russ. ed.).

by the next day 28 factories had come out on strike in the Vyborg District.<sup>1</sup> The workers' movement quickly spread to the other districts of Petrograd. There was in fact the danger of premature, unorganised actions on the part of the workers and soldiers.

As in the April political crisis the Bolshevik Party was the only force capable of giving an organised form to the spontaneous outbreak of mass indignation in order to prevent the bourgeoisie from letting loose a civil war. On the instructions of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) members of the Petrograd Committee and of the Army organisation of the Party agitated both at factories and among the soldiers against any kind of hasty action before receiving the call of the Party.<sup>2</sup> But it was also becoming more and more obvious that it would be impossible to restrain the workers and soldiers from coming out onto the streets.

On June 8 the Central Committee of the Party held a joint meeting with the Petrograd Committee, the Army organisation and representatives from the districts. It was decided to hold a demonstration on June 10 and in this way "to direct the movement along the lines of an organised and peaceful manifestation against counter-revolution".<sup>3</sup> The call of the Central and Petersburg Committees of the Bolshevik Party "To All Working People and All the Workers and Soldiers of Petrograd" was spread throughout the districts. It called for a peaceful demonstration under the slogans: "Down with the Tsarist Duma!", "Down with the State Council!", "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!" and "All Power to the All-Russia Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies!"<sup>4</sup> Such a peaceful demonstration by the capital's working people under the Bolsheviks' slogans would constitute a further attempt to express the will of the people to the All-Russia Congress of Soviets and to induce it to take power.

The news that the Bolshevik Central and Petersburg Committees had called for a demonstration on June 10 was warmly welcomed at the factories. Active preparations for it began in all districts.

The S.R.-Menshevik leaders of the Petrograd Soviet responded to the news differently. Chkhheidze made an emergency statement on it at the June 9 session of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets, describ-

<sup>1</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, pp. 169-70 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> Y. M. Sverdlov, *Selected Articles and Speeches, 1917-1919*, Moscow, 1939, p. 28 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The First Legal Petersburg Committee of the Bolsheviks in 1917*, pp. 145-46 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Soldatskaya Pravda*, June 10, 1917.

ing the coming peaceful demonstration—which had been called for the purpose of supporting the Congress of Soviets and protecting it from counter-revolutionary provocations—as a “Bolshevik plot” directed against the Soviets.<sup>1</sup> Taking advantage of their majority the S.R.s and the Mensheviks passed a resolution banning demonstrations for 3 days on the grounds that “all manner of shady elements” were planning to make use of peaceful manifestations as occasions for pogroms.<sup>2</sup>

The banning of the demonstration by the Congress of Soviets produced a difficult situation. On the one hand it was a blatant violation of democratic rights by the conciliators and yet another manifestation of the hostility of the Mensheviks and Right S.R.s to the Bolshevik Party. On the other hand, the Bolsheviks could not entirely ignore the decision of the Congress, which was, as Lenin put it, a “half-organ” of power, the conciliators’ majority notwithstanding.

Torrents of malicious slander poured from the rostrum of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets and from the pages of the bourgeois press alleging that “Lenin’s men” were “plotting to seize power behind the back of the Congress of Soviets”. The Bolsheviks’ answer to this was a “Draft Statement of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and the Bureau of the Bolshevik Faction to the All-Russia Congress of Soviets on the Banning of the Demonstration”, written by Lenin himself. The Central Committee of the Party and the Bolshevik faction declared to the Congress that the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies were closer than anything else to being truly revolutionary organs of government and the Bolsheviks therefore always had and always would stand in principle for the transfer of all power to them, despite the fact that they were then in the hands of the defencist Menshevik and S.R. parties.<sup>3</sup>

The open shift of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties to the side of the bourgeoisie created additional difficulties for the Bolsheviks in winning support for the transfer of governmental powers to the Soviets, but this could not alter the general line of the Bolshevik Party, that of the peaceful advance of the Revolution. On the night of June 9-10 the Bolshevik faction of the First All-Russia Congress and the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) had their meetings. On Lenin’s advice, the Central Committee decided to observe the decision of the All-Russia Congress and to cancel the call to the people which had

<sup>1</sup> The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, Vol. 1, p. 375 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 380.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 25, pp. 77-78.

been prepared for publication in *Pravda* and to print in its place an explanation of the current state of affairs.<sup>1</sup> Members of the Central and Petersburg Committees, of the Army organisation and of the Bolshevik faction of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets went out to speak at factories and to the garrison troops.

It took the Bolsheviks all their time to hold back the workers and soldiers. The gap between the workers and the conciliatory majority of the All-Russia Congress, which they nicknamed “The Congress of Zemstvo Chiefs”, was now very great.<sup>2</sup> It was only the Bolshevik Party’s tremendous authority which made it possible to forestall precipitous action, and the workers of the Putilov Works and the New Lessner, Old Parviainen and New Parviainen factories, and the soldiers of the Moscow 180th and 3rd infantry reserve regiments, the machine-gunners and other army units, all rescinded their original decisions to go out and march on June 10.<sup>3</sup>

But the S.R. and Menshevik attempt to prevent the mass of workers and soldiers from taking a step to the Left did not succeed completely. The banning of the peaceful march by the Congress of Soviets only intensified the movement to have the conciliators cleared out of the Soviets and to make them truly militant, revolutionary bodies. A general meeting of the workers of the Shchetinin Plant cancelled the mandates of all their deputies who did not fight in their interests.<sup>4</sup> And Erikson workers decided to replace all except their Bolshevik deputies.<sup>5</sup> The demand also increased for the reorganisation of the Petrograd Soviet and its Executive Committee on the basis of the proportional representation of all political parties.

Frightened by the militant mood of the people, the conciliators decided to manoeuvre and the All-Russia Congress of Soviets appointed a demonstration for June 18. The Mensheviks and S.R.s hoped that the demonstration would now be held under the banner of support for the coalition Government and approval of the offensive that was to begin at the front on the same day. But reality proved how rash the hopes of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties were. The June 18 march through Petrograd involved about half a million workers and soldiers, who marched only under Bolshevik

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 590; *Pravda*, June 11, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> N. Baturin, *The Struggle to Transform the Soviets into Organs of Proletarian Dictatorship*, Leningrad, 1925, p. 25 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. II, p. 289; *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in May-June 1917. The June Demonstration*, pp. 501-03 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Soldatskaya Pravda*, June 21, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Pravda*, June 17, 1917.

banners and posters proclaiming: "Stop the counter-revolution!", "Down with the Tsarist Duma!", "Down with the State Council!", "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!", "All power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies!" Mass marches of workers and soldiers also took place in Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Vladimir, Kharkov, Rostov-on-Don, Kiev, Minsk, Riga, Revel and other cities. These all demonstrated the enormous strength of the revolutionary classes and the growing Bolshevik influence among them. Lenin wrote: "The demonstration in a few hours scattered to the winds, like a handful of dust, the empty talk about Bolshevik conspirators and showed with the utmost clarity that the vanguard of the working people of Russia, the industrial proletariat of the capital, and the overwhelming majority of the troops support slogans that our Party has always advocated."<sup>1</sup>

After the June demonstrations the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies continued its work. It heard the sections' reports on the labour, agrarian, national, food, financial and other questions. Speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Labour P. N. Kolokolnikov outlined the Mensheviks' programme for "settling relations between labour and capital". This boiled down to no more than fond hopes for the issuing of decrees to introduce an 8-hour day (with overtime permitted), to deal with unemployment (in particular to set up labour exchanges), and to put an end to the system of military regimentation of workers at factories.<sup>2</sup> All this was going to be done by the coalition Government, i.e., there was not a chance of its being done at all.

V. M. Chernov gave the report on the agrarian question. He avoided the most vital issues—the abolition of landownership, the nationalisation of the land and its transfer to the organised peasantry. Instead, the S.R.s only advanced again the idea of creating a cumbersome and bureaucratic system of bodies "to study the peasant question" as part of the preparations for convening a Constituent Assembly.<sup>3</sup> In opposition to the reformist proposals of the Mensheviks and S.R.s, the Bolsheviks presented their own programme for the solution of the agrarian and other questions which was designed to further the progress of the Revolution, but it was rejected by the Congress.

In addition to general political issues the First Congress of Soviets

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Vol. 2, p. 254 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

also dealt with the formation of an all-Russia centre—the Central Executive Committee (C.E.C.) of the Soviets. It was planned to number 300, the Congress electing 150 members from delegates living in Petrograd, 100 from other areas and 50 from the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>1</sup> This did not give rise to disagreement but a struggle took place at the Congress around the principles on which the structure of the Central Executive Committee (which was to carry out the functions of the highest organ of the Soviets between congresses) was to be based. The Bolsheviks were trying to build up a united all-Russia centre which could unite the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Peasants' Soviets. With this aim in view the Bolshevik faction agreed to include in the C.E.C. the Central Executive Committee of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies as elected at the First Congress of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.<sup>2</sup>

The ordinary peasant members of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies were in favour of uniting with the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. But the E.C. of the Peasants' Soviet was opposed to it. A. R. Gots, an E.C. member, declared on June 16 that the Bureau of the Executive Committee of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies was against the formation of a single united central Soviet body.<sup>3</sup> And nothing definite resulted from the work of the conciliation commission set up by the First Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Thus, through the fault of the petty-bourgeois parties, the all-Russia centres of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies were to remain separated for a long time.

The party composition of the First C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was as follows: 58 Bolsheviks, 123 Mensheviks, 13 members of the *Unity* group, 119 S.R.s, and seven from other parties.<sup>4</sup> The S.R.s and Mensheviks were thus in an overwhelming majority. Besides, the conciliators' majority at the Congress gave the C.E.C. powers to co-opt representatives of other "socialist" parties.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63.

<sup>2</sup> This condition was not accidental, because in the period of time that had elapsed since the All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies many Right-wing S.R. leaders had been co-opted onto the All-Russia C.E.C. that was elected by the Congress. The Bolsheviks objected to their joining the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

<sup>3</sup> *The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Vol. 2, pp. 60-62 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 423-26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

The First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, mainly S.R.-Menshevik in composition, did not therefore solve a single one of the most burning questions—the questions of power, of ending the war, of overcoming the economic dislocation and the land question—in the working people's interests. It did, however, reveal the polarisation of the revolutionaries (the Bolsheviks) on the one hand and the conciliators (the S.R.s and Mensheviks) on the other. Summing up the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets, Lenin said that it marked the "great withdrawal of the Menshevik and Narodnik leaders *from* the revolution".<sup>1</sup>

#### CHAPTER FOUR

### THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES FROM THE JULY CRISIS TO THE CRUSHING OF THE KORNILOV REVOLT



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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 60.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION  
TO THE CRIMING  
OF  
THE WORKERS  
BY  
THEIR OWN  
CLASS  
AND  
THEIR  
LEADERS.  
THE JULY POLITICAL CRISIS  
IN  
THE SOVIET OF DEPUTIES

1. THE CENTRAL AND LOCAL SOVIETS DURING  
THE JULY POLITICAL CRISIS

The positions taken by the S.R.-Menshevik majority at the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies indicated that the leaders of "revolutionary democracy" now supported unconditionally the Provisional Government's anti-popular home and foreign policies. This gave the Russian bourgeoisie a completely free hand in carrying out its aggressive plans. Without even waiting for the All-Russia Congress of Soviets to finish, Kerensky signed the order for the offensive which began on June 18 when fighting was resumed on the South-Western Front. This offensive was described by Lenin as "a turning point in the whole policy of the Russian revolution, that is, it will be a transition from waiting, from paving the way for peace by means of a revolutionary uprising from below, to the resumption of the war".<sup>1</sup>

The Petrograd Soviet debated the offensive on June 20. The conciliators suggested that the deputies should issue an appeal to the soldiers fighting in the offensive declaring that it would "give the Russian Revolution new strength in its struggle for universal peace (!)". The Bolsheviks protested resolutely against taking such a distorted view of the resumed slaughter. At this particular session of the Soviet, soldiers' deputies predominated, many of whom had already given in to the chauvinist agitation, and this influenced the outcome of the debate. The conciliators' resolution was approved by 472 deputies, but a large minority (271) voted against it. *Pravda* wrote in this connection: "If even in the Petrograd Soviet with its unequal representation—where the interests of our policy are so grossly violated—if even in this Soviet more than one-third of the deputies speaks for us, this means that the overwhelming majority

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 25.

of the workers and soldiers of Petrograd already share the viewpoint of our Party.”<sup>1</sup>

An emergency joint session of the E.C.s of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies was called in Moscow on June 22, 1917. The Mensheviks and S.R.s put up the Menshevik Kibrik as their main speaker. He tried to convince the meeting that the offensive was designed “to defend free revolutionary Russia from the encroaching German imperialism”. P. G. Smidovich and other Bolsheviks spoke against the defencists but the Mensheviks' resolution was carried by 52 votes to 24.<sup>2</sup>

The offensive was also bitterly debated at a plenary meeting of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The Bolshevik faction submitted a draft resolution exposing the Provisional Government's imperialist policy which the Mensheviks and S.R.s tried to defeat. They spread rumours among the deputies that “Lenin's men” intended “to disorganise the Army so as to make it easier for the enemy”. The Bolsheviks then included in their draft the following additional sentence: “Protesting against the course of the offensive, the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies opposes the taking of partial actions which lead to the disorganisation of the troops.”<sup>3</sup> But the Soviet approved the Menshevik resolution proposed by the Executive Committee by 391 votes to 232.<sup>4</sup> So in Moscow too well over a third of the City Soviet of Workers' Deputies voted against the renewed offensive at the front.

In Kronstadt the Bolsheviks won a convincing victory. Their resolution protesting against the Provisional Government's actions was adopted by 195 votes to 65. The revolutionary sailors and workers of Kronstadt called on the Soviets of the entire country to expose both the Provisional Government's anti-popular policy and the conciliationism of the petty-bourgeois parties, to prevent revolutionary regiments from being withdrawn from the cities, and to agitate for new elections to the Soviets, recalling deputies who supported the offensive.<sup>5</sup>

The deputies of the Riga, Minsk and other Soviets were greatly alarmed by the news of the offensive at the front. The Riga Soviet

<sup>1</sup> *Pravda*, June 22, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, June 23, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in May-June 1917. The June Demonstration*, p. 224 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Y. Ignatov, *The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, p. 257 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> Resolution of the Kronstadt Soviet on the Offensive at the Front—*Golos Pravdy*, Kronstadt, June 24, 1917.

declared that it considered that “fraternisation at the front lines is the only way out of the imperialist war and this should be promoted in every way”.<sup>1</sup>

The Bolshevik resolution proposed to the Minsk Soviet was adopted by 123 votes to 75.<sup>2</sup> The Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies at Tomsk, Yaroslavl and other places also protested against the offensive.

The June offensive proved to be not only a political adventure but a military adventure, too. It had not been properly prepared and was strangled almost at once, after a brief initial success. The Russian Army lost over 60,000 men.

The defeat at the front, together with the worsening economic situation, led to another crisis for the Provisional Government. The Cadet Ministers Shingaryov, Shakhovskoy and Manuilov resigned from the Government early in July. The differences between the Cadet Ministers and the rest of the Government on the Ukrainian question was their formal pretext for resigning.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the ruling bourgeois party wanted to precipitate a Government crisis in the hope of frightening the Mensheviks and S.R.s into handing all power over to the counter-revolutionary landowners and capitalists. The situation that resulted was, therefore, this: either the Menshevik and S.R. parties, who were in the majority in the Soviets and fully responsible for their policy, could solve the political crisis by throwing in their lot with the revolutionary workers and soldiers, so doing away with dual power and concentrating all power in the hands of the Soviets, or else they could capitulate to the landowners and capitalists and agree to set up a counter-revolutionary military dictatorship in the country. Subsequent events showed that the petty-bourgeois socialists bowed to the big bourgeoisie even in this situation and came to a deal with the Cadets, so letting counter-revolution loose.

The Kerensky Government's attempts to dissolve some regiments of the Petrograd garrison and to “unburden” Petrograd of its revolutionary workers, combined with lockouts and a worsening food crisis, aroused the anger of the workers and soldiers and they were

<sup>1</sup> T. Draudin, *October and the Riga Section of the Front*, p. 59 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in May-June 1917. The June Demonstration*, p. 218 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> The Cadets allegedly resigned over a declaration of the Provisional Government addressed to the Ukrainian Rada (Council) proposing that a ruling body for the Ukraine, a general secretariat, be set up by agreement with the Central Rada. The Cadets wanted the solution of the Ukrainian question postponed until after the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

now determined to protest. But the Bolshevik Party, which still comprised the Left opposition in the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets and in the Petrograd, Moscow and most other Soviets, had to pursue flexible tactics. Throughout July the Central, Petrograd and district Party committees and the Bolshevik factions in the district Soviets consistently followed the line of joint action with the C.E.C. of the Soviets and with the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies against the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and landowners.

On July 3 the workers and soldiers of the Vyborg District began spontaneous demonstrations. The workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet called an emergency meeting. The following resolution proposed by the Bolsheviks was adopted: "In view of the power crisis, the workers' section finds it necessary to insist that the All-Russia Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies take power immediately." The deputies also decided to elect a commission which they authorised "to act in concert with the C.E.C. and the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet". Other members of the workers' section were to go to their respective districts to inform the workers and soldiers of this decision. The Mensheviks and S.R.s, who now found themselves in the minority, protested and left the assembly room.<sup>1</sup> The commission, consisting of the Bolsheviks I. S. Ashkenazi, A. S. Yenukidze, A. F. Kornev and others, worked energetically. I. S. Ashkenazi writes in his memoirs: "We did not leave Taurida Palace for three days and nights. Everything was in a whirl. We got in contact with the districts at once and they gave us reports on the situation in the factories."<sup>2</sup>

In addition to doing explanatory work the Bolshevik Party took organisational steps to preserve order during the coming march through Petrograd. An Operations Headquarters was set up, attached to the Party's City Army Organisation, to direct the Petrograd soldiers participating in the demonstration. The Headquarters instructed the soldiers' committees of regiments, companies and other army units to call meetings to elect leaders for the period of the march to watch closely the movements of military detachments, to remain on the alert, and to keep in touch with the Army Organisation.<sup>3</sup>

The conciliators behaved differently. The S.R. and Menshevik

leaders of the C.E.C. of the Soviets, of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and of the Petrograd Soviet acted in unison with the Provisional Government in hastily working out plans to suppress the revolutionary actions of the workers and soldiers of the capital. Kerensky (then at the South-Western Front) sent a cable to Prime-Minister Lvov demanding the ruthless suppression of any "rioting" in the capital, the disarming of the Petrograd garrison troops and court proceedings against people attending meetings or taking part in demonstrations.<sup>1</sup> Kerensky's demands were sympathetically received by the Menshevik and S.R. leaders and the Army Department of the Petrograd Soviet sent a cable to all garrison units condemning the men of the 1st Machine-Gunners Regiment for deciding to go out into the streets and present demands to the C.E.C. of the Soviets.<sup>2</sup> A joint session of the C.E.C. Bureau and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies issued an appeal to the population which denounced in advance as "traitors to the revolutionary cause" anybody who took part in the coming demonstration.<sup>3</sup>

The leaders of the defencist Mensheviks and the Right S.R.s took an exceedingly active part in the preparations for crushing this peaceful demonstration of the Petrograd workers and soldiers. The Menshevik V. S. Voitinsky said afterwards: "It took us the whole of July 3 to move in the troops to fortify the Taurida Palace. The armoured cars were the first to come to our aid. We did not bring them in as part of the demonstration but as a military force!"<sup>4</sup> The Chairman of the C.E.C., N. S. Chkheidze, demanded from the commander of the reserve battalion of the Izmailovsky Regiment 400 armed soldiers and 500 men armed with rifles and guns from the Oranienbaum Rifle School "to guard Taurida Palace". Chkheidze also requested the commander of the Guards Naval Depot to "send to the commandant of Taurida Palace all men free from duty to guard the Executive Committee".<sup>5</sup>

But on July 3 the Provisional Government still found itself without sufficient military forces to suppress the demonstration. Most Guards regiments were uncertain what to do and soldiers' committees refused to carry out the orders of the Petrograd Military Dis-

<sup>1</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. II, p. 481 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Bolshevising of the Petrograd Garrison*, p. 188 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, July 4, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> "The All-Russia C.E.C. in the July Days of 1917", published documents—*Krasny Arkhiv* (Red Archives) No. 5 (18), 1926, p. 215 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 217-18.

<sup>1</sup> *The Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.). Minutes*, pp. 18, 399; *Pravda*, July 4, 1917 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> I. S. Ashkenazi, *Memoirs*, L.P.A., File 4000.

<sup>3</sup> *The Petrograd Bolsheviks in 1917*, p. 325 (Russ. ed.).

trict Headquarters. It was then that the conciliators came to the rescue of the counter-revolutionary forces. Nine C.E.C. members (Gots, Voitinsky, Lieber and six others) appended their signatures to the orders of General Polovtsev calling the soldiers into Petrograd.<sup>1</sup>

The demonstration in Petrograd on July 4 was 400,000-strong. The troops of the Petrograd garrison marched together with the workers, as did soldiers who had come from Kronstadt, Peterhof, Oranienbaum and Krasnoye Syelo. They marched under the Bolshevik slogans: "All Power to the Soviets!", "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers!" and "Down with the War!" Lenin addressed the marchers with a brief speech from the balcony of Kshesinskaya's Palace. He greeted them on behalf of the Petrograd proletariat and expressed confidence that the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" would triumph. The leader of the revolution appealed for "firmness, steadfastness and vigilance".<sup>2</sup>

The Provisional Government decided to use the masses' peaceful action as the occasion for an onslaught on the revolutionary forces. Detachments of military cadets, Cossacks and Black Hundreds<sup>3</sup> fired on the marchers from windows, attics and rooftops, and a battle took place between the soldiers of the 1st Machine-Gunners Regiment and the Cossacks on Liteiny Bridge. The number of killed and wounded on the march was 400; but the workers and soldiers used their arms only when it was necessary to defend themselves.<sup>4</sup>

In the evening of July 4 a joint emergency session of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies was called in the Taurida Palace to find a way out of the situation. The workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet spoke for "the All-Russia Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies taking all power into its own hands".<sup>5</sup> Under the pressure of the revolutionary people 90 delegates elected by the workers of the biggest Petrograd plants and by the garrison were admitted to the meeting room of the C.E.C. Four of them were given the floor. They all made the same demand—that all power be given to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

The statements of the workers' and soldiers' delegates at this ses-

<sup>1</sup> O. N. Znamensky, *The July Crisis of 1917*, p. 87 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> The Black Hundreds—the name given to marauding gangs of counter-revolutionaries; they had been so called since the time of the 1905-07 Russian Revolution.

<sup>4</sup> *Rabochy i Soldat* (Worker and Soldier), July 26 and 27, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Pravda*, July 4, 1917.

sion of the C.E.C. fully reflected the mood of the working-class districts of the capital, of the reserve regiments, of the Navy depots and the crews of the ships of the Baltic Fleet. A 15,000-strong meeting of Putilov workers urged the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets "to take power in its hands and proclaim the Provisional Government deposed".<sup>1</sup> And the workers of the Shlisselburg Gunpowder Works declared: "Enough hesitating! In the name of freedom, in the name of peace, in the name of the world proletarian revolution, the All-Russia C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies must take power."<sup>2</sup> A joint meeting of Centrobalt and ships' committees also demanded the transfer of all power to the C.E.C. and the formation of a revolutionary-democratic government responsible to it.

These and similar resolutions were graphic testimony of the fact that the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!", advanced by the Bolsheviks three months earlier, was now recognised by class-conscious workers and advanced soldiers and sailors as being in the vital interests of all working people, and had been adopted by them as their own.

Backed by the Mezhraiontsi and some Left S.R.s (B. Kamkov, M. Spiridonova and others), the Bolsheviks waged a determined struggle at the July 4 joint meeting of the C.E.C. and the E.C. of the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies to establish the single rule of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. The Bolsheviks' resolution, read by A. V. Lunacharsky, said:

"Proceeding from the fact that two months' experience of the coalition ministry has revealed the complete helplessness of this alliance of the Soviet's representatives with those of the bourgeoisie, and that it has not produced a single serious reform but only a further worsening of the economic dislocation, bringing the revolution to the brink of defeat, this meeting declares that the only way out of the new power crisis, caused by the open shift of the Cadet Party to the camp of counter-revolution, is the transfer of all power to a Provisional Government consisting of delegates of the central organ of the All-Russia Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies."<sup>3</sup>

But this revolutionary means of solving the question of the organisation of power was not acceptable to the Right-wing S.R. and

<sup>1</sup> M. Mitelman, B. Glebov, A. Ulyanovsky, *The History of the Putilov Works, 1901-1917*, Moscow, 1961, p. 624 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, p. 194 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> A. Shlyapnikov, *1917*, Book 4, Moscow-Leningrad, 1931, pp. 295-96 (Russ. ed.).

Menshevik leaders of the C.E.C. They were governed in their actions solely by a resolution that had been passed by the Menshevik Party's C.C. on July 3. This proposed the formation of a government "with bourgeois representatives prevailing", and only in the event of its being impossible to form "such a ministry" (a bourgeois one.—A. A.) should "the Central Committee of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies be authorised to form one...".<sup>1</sup> The Menshevik-Internationalists, led by Martov, spoke at the meeting in the capacity of "a timid opposition". They did not even support the idea of "a homogeneous socialist government" at that time, but favoured a coalition government with Soviet representatives holding "at least most of the seats".<sup>2</sup> The proposals of the Bolsheviks, the Mezhraiontsi and the Internationalists were therefore rejected by the Right-wing S.R.s and the defencists.

Akventsev, Dan and Tsereteli put up a strong fight on behalf of the bourgeoisie. After first raising the bogey of the "Bolshevik peril", Dan remarked: "As for us, the question has not been presented in such a way that the acceptance of power by the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies is either necessary or inevitable."<sup>3</sup> Tsereteli proposed instead that the Provisional Government (as it was after the Cadets had left it) be recognised as "the bearer of revolutionary power" and that a congress of Soviets be convened in Moscow a fortnight later to solve the problem of organising power "once and for all". But the counter-revolutionary essence of this intended "flight" of the conciliators' leaders from the turmoil of Petrograd to "the tranquillity of Moscow" was so obvious that it found no support even among some of the defencists. So Tsereteli then decided that the time had come to make a clean breast of his true sympathies. In his winding up speech he announced openly that the Bolsheviks and the S.R.s had no intention of breaking away from the bourgeoisie: "The resignation of the Cadets does not mean the disintegration of our alliance with them.... When our adversaries [i.e., the Bolsheviks.—A. A.] suggest that we break off from bourgeois elements and take all power in our hands, they forget that they demand that we change our entire policy."<sup>4</sup> This, indeed, was the whole point. The Right-wing S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the Soviets continued to be loyal to the Cadets.

<sup>1</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 275.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, July 5, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> A. Shlyapnikov, op. cit., Book 4, p. 289.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, July 1917, (my emphasis.—A.A.).

The majority of the votes at the joint session of the C.E.C. went to the S.R.-Menshevik resolution (40 Bolsheviks, Mezhraiontsi and Menshevik-Internationalists voting against). This resolution said that "the Cadets' departure cannot by any means be regarded as an excuse for depriving the Government of the support of revolutionary democracy... all power must therefore remain in the hands of the present Government..."

The whole country was thrown into a state of excitement by the July events in the capital. The Moscow City Committee of the Bolshevik Party decided to hold a peaceful march on July 4 in solidarity with the workers of Petrograd, who had come out in defence of Soviet power. But the Mensheviks and S.R.s were, of course, opposed to the idea and a joint session of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies banned all street demonstrations by a majority of 442 to 242. This ban was condemned by many sections of the Moscow proletariat. The workers at the Bromley, the Michelson, the Telephone and other factories protested against it. And the Soviets of Workers' Deputies of the Butyrsky, Gorodskoy, Lefortovo and Simonovsky districts all demanded that the new political crisis should be solved by transferring full power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.<sup>1</sup> In the Central Industrial Area too the Bolsheviks and the S.R.s tried to prevent the revolutionary masses from expressing their will. The Moscow Regional Bureau of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies sent a directive to all the towns of the Moscow Region insisting that "no action be taken without a special appeal from the central Soviet organs".<sup>2</sup>

But the Bolsheviks succeeded in paralysing the opportunist actions of the Bureau. The Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) appealed to all local Bolshevik organisations in the region to support the efforts of the Petrograd proletariat and the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison to secure the transfer of power to the Soviets.<sup>3</sup> Emergency meetings of city and district committees and of the Bolshevik factions in the Soviets were called to discuss this Party appeal. The Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) in Ivanovo-Voznesensk, where the Bolsheviks were in the majority in the Soviet, decided (on July 4) to hold a general city march and to take

<sup>1</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. II, p. 484; *The Preparation for and the Victory of the October Revolution in Moscow*, p. 193; *Sotsial-Demokrat*, July 15 and 19, 1917 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66.

<sup>3</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, p. 102 (Russ. ed.).

over control of the post and telegraph offices and immediately to summon members of the E.C. and deputies of the Soviet. On the next day an extraordinary meeting of the Soviet was convened jointly with all factory committees. The Bolshevik resolution supporting the demand for the transfer of full power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies was approved by an overwhelming majority. On July 7 Ivanovo-Voznesensk cabled the Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.): "A massive demonstration of all workers and soldiers took place here yesterday. There is a demand for the transfer of power to the Soviets. Committee."<sup>1</sup>

The workers and soldiers of Petrograd were backed by the Soviets of Kronstadt, Yekaterinburg, Krasnoyarsk, Tsaritsyn, Minsk and other cities, but it would, of course, be wrong to suppose that all Soviets reacted to the July 3-5 events everywhere in the same way. Of the 82 city, district and village Soviets on which we have managed to get information, 50 approved the actions of the Provisional Government and the C.E.C. of the Soviets while only 32 Soviets expressed solidarity with the Petrograd workers and came out for full Soviet rule.

Militant revolutionary decisions were taken as a rule by those Soviets where veteran workers and revolutionary-minded soldiers comprised the majority of deputies. However, the Soviets in gubernia, uyezd and other cities with a predominantly petty-bourgeois population gave their unconditional support to the S.R.-Menshevik leaders of the C.E.C. and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and the Petrograd Soviet. Petty-bourgeois democracy, while disapproving of "the extremes" of the Provisional Government, still believed that the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the C.E.C. and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies would be able to find a "painless way out" of the existing situation.

The crushing of the peaceful march of the Petrograd workers and soldiers began a period of extensive offensive by the bourgeoisie and the landlords on the Bolshevik Party, the Soviets of Deputies and all other mass workers', soldiers' and peasants' bodies. On the night of July 4-5 a detachment of soldiers raided the editorial offices of *Pravda* on the orders of the Commander of the Petrograd Military District, General Polovtsev. Later on the same day the Trud (Labour) printing shop, which printed Bolshevik publications, was also raided. And the Bolshevik worker I. A. Voinov was shot

<sup>1</sup> O. N. Znamensky, op. cit., p. 138.

dead in Shpalernaya Street while distributing *Listok Pravdy* (*Pravda Bulletin*).

This orgy of the counter-revolution was followed by a strengthening of its armed forces. On July 5-6 armed troops arrived in the capital from the front lines, having been called in by the Provisional Government with the agreement of the C.E.C. of the Soviets. They were formed into a Joint Detachment of the Army in Active Service under the command of a member of the S.R. faction of the C.E.C., Lieutenant Mazurenko. The S.R. leaders Avksentyev and Gots both addressed Mazurenko's detachment and bid these punitive troops "to be cool and collected in doing the duty that democracy (?) had given them".<sup>1</sup>

A special Government committee was also set up in Petrograd to "restore order". This included, alongside representatives of the military, the Menshevik Skobelev, the S.R.s Avksentyev, Gots, Lebedev, and other leading conciliators.<sup>2</sup> The Provisional Government met on the evening of July 6 to consider how to deal with the Bolsheviks. Kerensky demanded that the most severe measures be taken against the leaders of the working class. It was decided to arrest Lenin and other leaders of the Bolshevik Party.<sup>3</sup> The Prosecutor of the Petrograd Court Chamber began legal proceedings against Lenin, Kollontai, Raskolnikov, Roshal, Kozlovsky and other Bolsheviks, all members of the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet. They were charged with treason and with "organising an armed uprising".<sup>4</sup>

Kerensky's intelligence agents, who had instructions to "behead" the revolution, sought in vain for Lenin, as the Bolshevik Party concealed its leader in a safe place. But many prominent Bolshevik Party workers—Kollontai, Raskolnikov, Roshal, Sakharov and Khaustov among them—were thrown into Petrograd's Kresty prison. One member of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)'s Army Organisation, N. V. Krylenko, was arrested at Mogilev railway station. P. Y. Dybenko, chairman of Centrobalt, and V. A. Antonov-Ovseyenko, editor of the Bolshevik newspaper *Volna* (The Wave), were arrested in Helsingfors. R. F. Sivers, editor of *Okopnaya Pravda*, was arrested at the Northern Front. Left S.R.s A. M. Ustinov, P. P. Proshyan, P. I. Shishko and others were also arrested.

The Cadet Party, led by Milyukov, directed the work of the

<sup>1</sup> Central State Military Historical Archives (C.S.M.H.A.), File 2031.

<sup>2</sup> A. Shlyapnikov, op. cit., Book 4, p. 297 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> Rech, July 8, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> Novaya Zhizn, July 22, 1917.

counter-revolutionary organisations. Members of the State Duma, led by Rodzyanko, and certain business circles and sections of the industrial bourgeoisie which followed Ryabushinsky, co-ordinated their actions with the Cadet Party. They were seconded by the landowners, who organised a Union of Land Owners, and this was joined by village kulaks. Reaction united its forces in the Army, too. In late June a so-called Republican Centre was formed in Petrograd, whose main task was to co-ordinate the activities of counter-revolutionary Army organisations. A Chief Committee of the Officers' League was set up in the Headquarters of the Supreme Command and this established contacts with The Republican Centre.

On July 18 a session of the Private Conference of Members of the State Duma was held in Petrograd. Inveterate counter-revolutionaries made rabid speeches demanding that Lenin be "smashed", along with other prominent members of the Bolshevik Party and democratic bodies in the rear and at the front. The Black-Hundred V. M. Purishkevich and the Progressist A. M. Maslennikov demanded the immediate wiping out of the Soviets and the soldiers' committees, the official convocation of the State Duma, and the formation of a government of military dictatorship. On the next day the press printed an appeal from the Provisional Committee of the State Duma openly calling for an outright offensive against the Soviets and soldiers' committees and for a struggle to secure the undivided rule of the bourgeoisie.<sup>1</sup>

The behaviour of the pillars of reaction enraged the workers and soldiers. On July 21 representatives of the district Soviets of Petrograd held an emergency meeting. The plan of the organisers of the meeting was that it should simply express the attitude of the workers and soldiers to the Private Conference of members of the State Duma but a lively debate ensued on the political situation. The meeting heard resolutions from the Soviets of the Vyborg, Vasilyevsky Island, Peterhof, Kolomenskoye, Narva, Rozhdestvenskoye, Okhta, Porokhovo, Kolpino and Sestroretsk districts demanding the dissolution of the State Duma and State Council, the arrest of the members of the underground Black-Hundred "Union of the Russian People", the abolition of capital punishment and an end to the persecution of Bolsheviks.<sup>2</sup>

The stand taken by Petrograd's district Soviets and by those in the suburbs in defence of the Revolution met with approval in other

cities. The Kronstadt Soviet urged the C.E.C. to disperse the State Duma and the State Council and to bring to trial the leaders of the monarchical counter-revolution.<sup>1</sup> The Regional Committee of the Army, the Navy and the Workers of Finland also recommended the C.E.C. to insist on the immediate issue of a decree dissolving the Duma. A resolution of the Helsingfors Soviet stated: "The troops and the workers of Finland will give their total sympathy and support to every decisive measure taken in the fight against the counter-revolution."<sup>2</sup> The Grozny Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Cossacks' Deputies expressed its feelings even more categorically. A resolution of July 21 declared that the Soviet found it necessary to appeal to all Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to demand the immediate dissolution of the State Duma and the State Council as institutions which had raised the knife of counter-revolution over the liberated proletariat and revolutionary democracy. The Grozny Soviet's resolution concluded with the following appeal: "It is high time to do away with this nest of Purishkeviches and Maslennikovs! It is time for the proletariat and revolutionary democracy to put an end to their impudent attempts to put a yoke on the liberated people!"<sup>3</sup> The Soviets of Bryansk, Gorlovka, Dvinsk, Yenakiyevo, Zhizdra, Kishinev, Ufa, Nizhny Tagil, Khabarovsk and many other cities likewise demanded the dissolution of the State Duma and the State Council and the arrest of the Monarchist and Cadet instigators of the counter-revolution.

All this indicated that many local Soviets were now prepared to come out resolutely against the counter-revolution and to give their most energetic support to the central Soviet organs. On the other hand, the fact that millions of workers, soldiers and peasants still placed their hopes on "the omnipotence" of the S.R.-Menshevik C.E.C. and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and the Petrograd Soviet showed only too well that the masses did not yet realise how low the conciliators had fallen.

The July treachery of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, their move to the camp of counter-revolution, enabled the Provisional Government and the Army High Command to put on the agenda of the day the destruction of the Soviets and the soldiers' and peasants' committees and the establishment of an open military dictatorship. Those Soviets and soldiers' and sailors' committees which supported

<sup>1</sup> Rech, July 19, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis, p. 264 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> Proletarskoye Dyelo (The Proletarian Cause), Kronstadt, July 28, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Proletarskaya Revolutsia (The Proletarian Revolution) No. 5 (17), 1923, pp. 181-82 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis, p. 270 (Russ. ed.).

the Bolsheviks were the first to come under fire. On July 7 Kerensky ordered the dissolution of Centrobalt. The crews of the battleships *Petropavlovsk*, *Respublika* and *Slava*, which had taken part in the July demonstration, were now confronted with a demand to arrest their "ringleaders" and to send them to Petrograd to face trial.<sup>1</sup>

The Executive Committee of the Kronstadt Soviet urgently discussed Kerensky's order and decided to oppose it. They pointed out that the Soviet, in all its actions, pursued exclusively the interests of the revolution and the liberation of the working people, and that since there were no "counter-revolutionary instigators" among the sailors there would be no arrests. The Kronstadt Soviet rather recommended the sailors to elect new members to Centrobalt, men who "had already displayed their ability in the fight for freedom".<sup>2</sup>

Kerensky's order to dissolve Centrobalt caused much discontent on the ships of the Baltic Fleet. A resolution passed by a meeting of the sailors of the battleship *Respublika* proclaimed: "We are no traitors to our country and the revolution; we are her loyal defenders and ready at any moment to defend her freedom from her enemies, both foreign and domestic. We recognise the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet that we have elected. We obey its instructions and we shall defend its rights with all the means at our disposal as our own rights."<sup>3</sup> The sailors of the 2nd Cruiser Brigade declared their full confidence in the old members of Centrobalt and justified its revolutionary actions.<sup>4</sup>

The newly appointed commander of the Baltic Fleet, A. V. Razvodov, issued orders on July 12 and 19 cancelling regulations which gave recognition to the authority of the ships' committees established by the First Congress of Delegates of the Baltic Fleet. But the Provisional Government did not succeed in getting rid of Centrobalt, the highest organ of the sailors' committees. It is true that, having been weakened by the arrests of Bolsheviks, it was compelled to cease active work for a short while (July 11-26); but it was on July 31, under the pressure of pro-Bolshevik members, that the Third Centrobalt decided that "not a single order relating to the life of the Baltic Fleet shall be published without first being

considered by the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet unless it concerns strictly operational or navigational matters".<sup>1</sup>

Things were different in places where counter-revolutionary forces predominated. The Cossack ataman, Kaledin, instructed all garrison commanders of the Don Military District to be merciless in suppressing the revolutionary actions of the workers, soldiers and peasants. In Yekaterinodar the reactionary Army Council ordered the recall of Cossack deputies from the Soviet and E.C. of the Kuban Area.

The Mensheviks and S.R.s assisted the bourgeoisie in weakening the Soviets. They were particularly active in the towns of the Volga Area. On the demand of the conciliators, the Bolshevik Korsakov was compelled to leave his post as Chairman of the Kuznetsk Soviet on July 13. The Bolshevik Kukushkin, Chairman of the Volsk Soviet, was also removed (on July 15) at the instigation of the Mensheviks and S.R.s. The Bolshevik faction in the Balashov Soviet was very much weakened; and the conciliators in Kamyshin began to agitate for the complete destruction of the Soviet there, allowing the garrison commander to establish military rule.<sup>2</sup>

The Ministry of War and the Army High Command under General Kornilov drew up extensive plans for "dealing with" the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies and the company, battalion, regimental and other committees. Kornilov presented a draft "Regulation on the Central Committees of Fleets" to the Provisional Government on July 27 which laid down that "no order issued by a Fleet's Central Committee is valid until confirmed by the Fleet Commander". The rights of ships' and other sailors' committees were also severely restricted. On top of this, Kornilov ordered all soldiers and officers elected to various public bodies to return to and remain with their units.

These steps were intended to halt the advance of the Revolution in the Army and to drain the Soviets of their best men, and they led to protests from many Soviets. The Bolshevik Kirichenko, speaking at a meeting of the E.C. of the Kherson Soviet, said that Kornilov's order dealt a body blow to the Revolution as it would ruin the work of all public organisations.<sup>3</sup> The Kharkov Soviet then passed

<sup>1</sup> *Vestnik Uremennogo Pravitelstva*, July 8, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. II, p. 521 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Baltic Sailors in Preparing for and Carrying Through the Great October Socialist Revolution*, p. 138 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Volna*, Helsingfors, July 12, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes and Orders of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet*, p. 97 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> G. A. Gerasimenko, *The Struggle Between the Parties in the Soviets of the Lower Volga Area (1917)*, p. 71 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, pp. 251-53 (Russ. ed.).

a resolution describing Kornilov's order as a counter-revolutionary act which violated the rights of soldiers as citizens.<sup>1</sup>

The forces of counter-revolution stepped up their offensive on the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies in the rear garrisons by sending reserve troops to the front lines. Colonel Verkhovsky, the Moscow Military District Commander, issued an order on June 30 withdrawing many of the reserve regiments from the cities, sending most to the front and the rest to new stations. Verkhovsky's order was vigorously opposed in the Soviets and soldiers' committees. On July 3 a joint meeting of the Vladimir Gubernia Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, the E.C. of the Uyezd Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the regimental committees of the Vladimir garrison decided that the order was "incompatible with the critical position of the Revolution". But in order to avoid an armed clash it agreed to send the 82nd Infantry Reserve Regiment away from Vladimir, keeping 50 men from each company to guarantee the representation of the regiment in local bodies.<sup>2</sup>

What had happened to the Vladimir garrison evoked a response in other towns of the gubernia. The workers' section of the Kovrov Soviet protested at the sending of the 250th Reserve Infantry Regiment to the front lines, and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies of the Sobinka Textile Mill said it regarded the withdrawing of the 82nd Regiment from Vladimir as "a heavy blow to the entire cause of the revolution". A resolution adopted by the Orekhovo-Zuyev Soviet declared that the withdrawal of revolutionary troops from the towns to send them to the front lines was connected with the July events in Petrograd and was "not in the least required by the military situation ... but by the unworthy intrigues of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie".<sup>3</sup>

The 6th Heavy Artillery Regiment of the Tver garrison refused as one man to go to the front and sapper units refused to go to Archangel. The reserve regiments stationed in Nizhni-Novgorod, Yaroslavl, Tsaritsyn, Saratov and other towns also rebelled against orders to move. These actions of the soldiers of reserve regiments furthered the growth of political consciousness of the mass of the soldiers and made them rally closer round the Bolsheviks.

But the bourgeoisie and the High Command were determined to

<sup>1</sup> *Kharkov in the Great October Socialist Revolution. Collection of Documents*, Kharkov, 1947, p. 101 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Struggle for the Great October Socialist Revolution in Vladimir Gubernia*, pp. 62-63 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, p. 246 (Russ. ed.).

take advantage of their temporary victory in July to put a stop to the democratic changes that were taking place in the Army. Kerensky, Minister for the Army and Navy, issued orders for all members of the executive committees of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies who had not yet served in the armed forces in action to be sent to the front. This was followed by the reactionary "Statute on Commissars and Army Organisations (Committees, Meetings, Congresses and So On)" which gave Provisional Government commissars unlimited powers over soldiers' organisations, i.e., they could dissolve soldiers' committees, cancel their decisions, ban meetings and gatherings, suspend the soldiers' front-line newspapers and even disband units by armed force. The scope for the work of elected soldiers' bodies was limited to a minimum, and a new two- and even four-tier voting system was established in all units from divisions upwards which made it difficult for revolutionary-minded soldiers to get onto committees.<sup>1</sup>

With the direct assistance of the S.R. and Menshevik leaders, the revolutionary bodies and forces in the countryside were repressed. The socialist minister Tsereteli, in a cable addressed to gubernia, regional and city commissars of the Provisional Government, gave instructions for "the resolute suppression of all revolutionary actions and particularly any unwarranted seizure of landowners' land and property by the peasants".<sup>2</sup>

The so-called "Supplementary Order on the Protection of Planted Crops" which the Provisional Government issued on July 18 was directed against the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and the revolutionary land committees. This ruled that only Government food departments were authorised to deal with the sowing and harvesting of crops and that the instructions of other committees (i.e., the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies) "were not binding on the population".<sup>3</sup> Provisional Government commissars received a constant stream of instructions from Petrograd to "do away with agrarian disturbances" by means of armed force. Punitive expeditions were sent into villages large and small to crush Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and harass Bolsheviks and other active workers in the peasants' movement.

Members of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and of uyezd and volost land and food committees were arrested almost everywhere

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 2, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Vestnik Uremennogo Pravitelstva*, July 22, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *A Collection of Government Statutes and Orders*, 1917, No. 199, Section One, p. 1235 (Russ. ed.).

during July. In Pskov Gubernia all members of the land committee of Porkhov Uyezd were arrested on the orders of the Public Prosecutor. Fourteen volost land committees were brought to trial in Yelnya Uyezd, Smolensk Gubernia, and news of the prosecution of peasants' organisations came in from Kazan, Tula, Tambov, Novgorod, Mogilev, Chernigov, Kharkov and other gubernias.

But while the counter-revolutionary forces were engaged in a wholesale attack on the Soviets and the soldiers' and peasants' committees, the prolonged political crisis still remained unresolved. On July 22 the Provisional Government called together a meeting of representatives of the bourgeois and conciliators' parties. This conclave was afterwards described by the defencist "socialists" as "historic". The Cadets, Mensheviks and S.R.s agreed to form a "new" government quite independent of the Soviets and other democratic bodies.<sup>1</sup> The newspaper *Utro Rossii* (The Morning of Russia) faithfully described the atmosphere at the meeting in the Winter Palace, showing up the cowardice and treachery of the conciliators. The correspondent of this newspaper wrote that P. N. Milyukov addressed the following question, on behalf of the Cadet Party, to Chkhheidze, Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet: "Are you going to take power or are you going to let everything to be done by Kerensky?" Chkhheidze did not give a direct answer, but Tsereteli replied for him: "A Socialist Government cannot be formed at the moment because it would not express the will of the entire nation."<sup>2</sup> The Cadets had calculated correctly. As soon as they hinted that the liberal bourgeoisie might "step aside", the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the Soviets consented to any concessions. Milyukov declared at this "historic" meeting: "You yourselves have admitted in the speech of Tsereteli that you are unable to take power...."<sup>3</sup>

The treachery of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s meant that the political crisis of July 1917 was resolved in favour of the bourgeoisie. The second coalition Government, led by Kerensky, consisted of five Cadets, one Progressist, seven Mensheviks and S.R.s and two non-party members. The formation of the "new" coalition was described by Lenin as "the beginning of Bonapartism in Russia", for it opened the way to the creation of an unrestricted military dictatorship.

<sup>1</sup> *Dyen* (The Day), July 23 and 25, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Utro Rossii*, July 23, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## 2. THE BOLSHEVIK ORGANISATIONS AND THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES AFTER THE END OF THE PERIOD OF DUAL POWER

The July events marked an important stage in the development of the Revolution in Russia. The period of almost unlimited democratic liberties came to an end, a period in which the people had been able to express their will through the Soviets and committees, and these had taken measures to strengthen and advance the Revolution. Dual power, with two systems of government existing side by side, was replaced by the single rule of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

Under these new conditions it became necessary to determine the prospects for the further advance of the Revolution and to review the Bolsheviks' tactics in relation to the Soviets. On July 10 the Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) called a meeting of delegates of district Party committees, Party cells at big factories and Bolshevik factions in the district Soviets. When reports from the districts were heard it became apparent that people had marched under Bolshevik banners almost everywhere on July 3-4. It was also reported that partial re-elections to the Soviets had taken place in Narva and Kolomenskoye districts, with Bolsheviks being returned. The Kolpino District Soviet had taken an active part in the July events, with the Izhora Works stopping work, and on a decision of the workers' section of the Soviet a delegation was sent to Petrograd. The S.R.s had become particularly active since the crushing of the July demonstration and were trying to provoke the workers into fighting the Bolsheviks. The S.R.s had resorted to hostile actions in the Kolpino, Vasilyevsky Island, Neva and Zheleznodorozhny districts. The meeting also considered the theses on the present situation prepared for agitators by the executive commission of the Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.). These spoke of the possibility of attracting the majority of the Petrograd Soviet "to the path of resolute struggle against the counter-revolution".<sup>1</sup>

On July 5, at an extended meeting of the Moscow Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), I. F. Armand gave a report on the current situation. Expressing the view of the executive commission of the Moscow Committee of the Bolshevik Party, she spoke in favour of or-

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, pp. 161-65 (Russ. ed.).

ganising another (all-Russia) demonstration "to make the C.E.C. of the Soviets reckon with the will of the revolutionary people when the final decision on the question of power is taken". R. S. Zemlyachka, G. A. Usiyevich and others supported Armand.<sup>1</sup>

Some leaders of the Moscow Bolsheviks displayed Leftist tendencies in the July days and leaned towards sectarianism. For example P. G. Smidovich stated after this meeting that it had become impossible to work in the Soviets under the existing conditions and therefore "it was necessary to leave them for the time being".<sup>2</sup> The executive commission of the Moscow Party Committee had decided, however, that Bolsheviks should not leave the Soviets but should continue to work as before, exposing the conciliators and winning over internationalists and other sympathisers.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, when the question of their attitude towards the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was being discussed by the Moscow Committee, Smidovich, Popov and their followers continued to defend their erroneous position. They suggested boycotting the plenary and general meetings of the Soviets, i.e., they wanted to obstruct their work. Such ideas were opposed by most of the members of the Moscow Party Committee. Armand, Bubnov, Vladimirov, Obukh and Yaroslavsky countered the arguments put forward by Smidovich. Bubnov observed that by leaving the Soviets the Bolsheviks would make themselves semi-legal or illegal again, and that should not be allowed to happen. Yaroslavsky pointed out that the Bolsheviks' departure from the Moscow Soviet might make the position of Bolshevik deputies in those Soviets where they enjoyed considerable influence very difficult. Obukh spoke in favour of remaining not only in the Soviet but also in its various commissions, as the Bolsheviks would otherwise inevitably weaken their influence among the people.<sup>4</sup> After a lively debate it was settled that the Bolsheviks should leave neither the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies nor its Executive Committee and commissions.<sup>5</sup>

Things were different again in Kaluga. The S.R.-Menshevik bloc there virtually declared open war on the Bolsheviks. The conciliators got the Kaluga Soviet of Workers' Deputies to condemn the activities of the Bolshevik faction and to refuse it the financial

means necessary for carrying out pre-election agitation. The Bolsheviks thereupon left the Soviet in protest. This was undoubtedly a mistake, all the more so as the Kaluga Gubernia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) held shortly after the July events had noted a considerable growth of the Bolshevik influence in the Soviets. Bolsheviks left the Soviets altogether in only a very few places. But the circumstances in which the Bolsheviks had to work definitely became much more difficult.

In the first days of July most Bolshevik Party organisations were guided by the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" This was the keynote of the decisions of the Yekaterinburg, Kiev and Kharkov Party committees, of the Middle Siberia Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and other Party bodies.<sup>1</sup> But there was an absence of a clear-cut orientation in the resolutions of some Bolshevik congresses and conferences. A Moscow District Party Conference, representing 9,000 Bolsheviks, admitted that the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, as represented by the conciliators' majority, had handed full power to Kerensky. At the same time the resolution of the conference asserted that the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" would continue to be "a guiding principle" in future work.<sup>2</sup> Similar resolutions were adopted by Bolshevik conferences held in the Donets and Krivoi-Rog basin and in the South-West Territory, by Yekaterinburg and Tiflis City Party conferences, and by the Fifth Congress of the Social-Democrats in Latvia.

Far from all Party organisations, therefore, understood the changed situation in the country. Lenin's writings, especially his theses "The Political Situation" and his article "On Slogans",<sup>3</sup> played a great part in the development of new Party thinking on tactics. Lenin indicated first of all how matters stood after the July events in relation to the principal question of the Revolution, that of state power. The uncertain period which had lasted from February 27 to July 4 had come to an end. The forces of counter-revolution had organised themselves and had, in fact, now taken state power. The parties of the conciliators and their leaders had turned both themselves and the Soviets into "fig-leaves of the counter-revolution".<sup>4</sup> The slogan "All power to the Soviets!" no longer corresponded to the objective situation. "At present," wrote Lenin,

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, pp. 106-10.

<sup>2</sup> Party Archives of the M.C. and the M.C.C. of the C.P.S.U., File 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, pp. 149-51 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> Party Archives of the M.C. and the M.C.C. of the C.P.S.U., File 3.

<sup>1</sup> *Uralskaya Pravda*, July 9, 1917; *Golos Sotsial-Demokrata*, Kiev, July 6, 1917; *Proletary*, Kharkov, July 5, 1917; *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, pp. 117-18 and 128-30 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, July 12, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

"basic state power in Russia is virtually a military dictatorship."<sup>1</sup> The possibility of power passing to the Soviets by peaceful means, without involving the suppression of the bourgeoisie, had gone.

Lenin constantly urged the Party to explain to the workers, soldiers and peasants that there was now no other way to remove the military dictatorship than by struggle. "The aim of the insurrection can only be to transfer power to the proletariat, supported by the poor peasants, with a view to putting our Party programme into effect."<sup>2</sup> That was how Lenin outlined the new prospects for the socialist revolution.

In the new conditions, with dual power at an end and the undivided rule of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie having taken its place, armed struggle became the main means for the proletariat to win power. Of course, it was still possible that the situation might change again in the future to enable the people to establish Soviet power peacefully.

In advancing armed uprising as the task of the day Lenin drew the Party's attention to its difficulty. An uprising would be possible only in a national crisis. Meanwhile it was vital to gather strength patiently by making use of the Soviets and other mass bodies of the working people to form a political army for the socialist revolution, permitting no adventurism under any circumstances.

Lenin's theses "The Political Situation" were discussed at an extended meeting of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) on July 13-14 with representatives of the Petrograd Party Committee and Army Organisation, the Moscow Regional Bureau and the Moscow City and Area Party committees. The secretary of the Petrograd Party Committee G. I. Bokia, and A. M. Savelyev, an active participant in the Revolution, have said that only a minority voted for Lenin's theses at this July meeting of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.).<sup>3</sup> And a resolution worked out on the basis of this C.C. decision received 28 votes in favour, with 28 abstentions and 3 against, at the Second Petrograd All-City Party Conference.<sup>4</sup>

All this was to be expected. At a complicated moment, a turning point in the revolution, when the Bolsheviks had to revise their tactics and change their political slogans, it took a certain period

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> See the speeches of delegates at the Second Petrograd All-City Party Conference in *The Second and Third Petrograd All-City Conferences of the Bolsheviks in July and October 1917. Minutes and Materials*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, p. 85 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

of time (though not a very long one) for leading workers, and after them the rest of the Party, to grasp the meaning of the new situation and to see clearly the prospects of the socialist revolution. Because of the divergencies the slogan "All power to the Soviets!" was not rejected at the July meeting, which nevertheless marked a definite stage in the re-thinking of tactics. The resolution which it passed on the current situation correctly estimated the July 3-5 events, pointed out the dirty part which had been played by the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, and accurately characterised the position that the Soviets had found themselves in under the new conditions.<sup>1</sup>

An extended Party meeting took place in Moscow on July 15 with representatives of all city districts present. M. S. Olminsky reported that Lenin's theses "The Political Situation" had been discussed in Petrograd, along with the questions of what attitude to adopt towards the Soviets and to the arrests of Bolsheviks, etc., and that it had been decided not to leave the Soviets but to continue with the exposure of the Mensheviks and S.R.s.<sup>2</sup>

P. A. Japaridze spoke at an all-city conference of Bolsheviks in Baku, at which delegates approved the resolution of the July meeting of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)—as did Bolshevik organisations in Voronezh, Vladimir, Tver, Kaluga, Kazan and other cities.

In the second half of July, Party conferences or meetings took place almost everywhere. They were of great importance in reorienting the Bolsheviks in the new conditions. The Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) worked out special instructions for gubernia, city and district Party organisations on how to put into practice the resolutions of the July meeting of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) on improving organisational and political work in the Soviets.

The Bolshevik organisations of the Central Industrial Area were recommended to intensify the propaganda of Marxist ideas in the Soviets; to expose the tactics of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, who were involving themselves more and more in the activities of the imperialist bourgeoisie; to make clear the inevitable transfer of full power to the Soviets; to set up Bolsheviks' and Internationalists' factions where they did not exist and in this way to take the first step to winning the Soviets; and to hold fresh elections of deputies to Soviets at once from individual factories where the petty-bourgeois opportunistic line of their deputies was at variance with the revolutionary temper of the workers.

<sup>1</sup> C.P.S.U. in Resolutions, Part I, pp. 368-71 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, pp. 186-90 (Russ. ed.).

The Second Moscow Regional Party Conference was held from July 21 to 24. Bolshevik organisations from 13 gubernias were represented. The Moscow regional Party organisation had grown and strengthened itself considerably in the five months since February. It now numbered 41,604 members.<sup>1</sup> The Moscow Regional Conference outlined the organisational and political work of city, district and factory Party organisations, laying stress on the need to explain to the workers, soldiers and peasants the harmful nature of the policy of the Menshevik and S.R. parties, the policy of those "who began with conciliation and ended with treachery, who started by rejecting *all* power, and finished by giving up *any* power".<sup>2</sup> The Bolsheviks' duty now was to defend all the mass organisations that had been set up in the peaceful period of the Revolution—the Soviets, the factory committees, the soldiers' and peasants' committees and so forth—and to convert them into true centres of revolutionary activity.<sup>3</sup>

The writings of Lenin—such works as "Three Crises", "On Slogans", "Constitutional Illusions" and "Lessons of the Revolution"—represented important landmarks in the definition of Bolshevik tactics after the July events. Lenin steadily and consistently uncovered the counter-revolutionary nature of the Kerensky government, laid bare the treachery of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, and demonstrated the harmful character of petty-bourgeois illusions about the possibility of securing the transfer of power to the Soviets by putting "pressure" on the conciliatory Central Executive Committee of the Soviets. The leader of the revolution tirelessly explained to the Party that after the events of July 3-5 the revolution stepped onto a non-peaceful and very painful road. It was impossible now simply to give power to the Soviets. Lenin wrote: "The slogan calling for the transfer of state power to the Soviets ["All power to the Soviets!"]—A. A.] would now sound quixotic or mocking. Objectively it would be deceiving the people; it would be fostering in them the delusion that even *now* it is enough for the Soviets to want to take power, or to pass such a decision, for power to be theirs."<sup>4</sup>

It was therefore all the more necessary to be persistent in making the new political situation crystal clear to the masses, as many Soviets (big ones among them) continued even after the July events to 'keep to the slogans of the peaceful period of advance of the

revolution. For example, the E.C. of the Yekaterinburg Soviet called several meetings on July 16 which adopted resolutions demanding the immediate transfer of all power to the Soviets.<sup>1</sup> And the Chelyabinsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the First Miners' Congress of Western Siberia called for the emergency convocation of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets to settle the question of state power.<sup>2</sup> But such demands were not realistic. The S.R. and Menshevik Soviets were unable to take power even if they wanted to as they no longer possessed the strength to do it. "Unless this is understood, it is impossible to understand anything of the urgent questions of the day," said Lenin.<sup>3</sup>

Lenin's ideas on the Soviets in the new conditions of revolutionary advance were embodied in the resolutions of the Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) held in Petrograd from July 21 to August 3. Alongside other vital issues the Congress gave very much attention to the question of the Soviets. Stalin spoke on the Soviets in his report on the political situation, as did delegates from Party organisations throughout the country. All of them noted that since the February Revolution and up to the time of the July events the Soviets had been a great force and had possessed the real possibility of taking power, but the position had changed. M. I. Vasilyev (Yuzhnik) said that before July 3-4 the Soviets of Workers' Deputies had been extremely influential in the big cities, but that their influence had since vanished.<sup>4</sup> The delegate from the Grozny Bolshevik organisation, N. A. Anisimov, pointed out that the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" had been all right at the beginning of the revolution but now that the Soviets of Workers' Deputies had lost their former influence and authority with the working people this slogan ought to be replaced.<sup>5</sup>

Lenin's position on the Soviets in the new situation of the temporary victory of counter-revolution was defended at the Sixth Congress by A. S. Bubnov, V. P. Milyutin, J. V. Stalin and other delegates. Preobrazhensky and Bukharin, however, spoke against Lenin's line for the further advance of the socialist revolution. Preobrazhensky defended what was in essence the Trotskyist idea that it would be impossible for Russia to develop along the socialist path until the proletarian revolution had been victorious in the

<sup>1</sup> *The Preparation for and the Victory of the October Revolution in Moscow*, pp. 202-06, 520 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202-04.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 185.

<sup>1</sup> *Uralskaya Pravda*, July 20, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Western Siberia in the Struggle for the Socialist Revolution*, pp. 107-10; *Uralskaya Pravda*, July 28, 1917 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> *The Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.). Minutes*, p. 90 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

West.<sup>1</sup> As for Bukharin, he called for the setting up of new "revolutionary Soviets" to counterbalance the existing conciliatory ones. But this was an unscientific plan for the development of the revolution. It failed to take into account the prevailing balance of class forces in the country and reflected a lack of confidence in the ability of the Bolsheviks to win over the Soviets.<sup>2</sup>

Lenin suggested replacing the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" by a call for an armed struggle against the military dictatorship for the transfer of power to the proletariat supported by the poorest peasants. But, Lenin explained, the new aim did not stand in opposition to the former one, and the temporary cancelling of the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" did not mean that the Party was giving up the struggle for Soviet power. It was not the Soviet form of political organisation as such that was being called into question; it was simply necessary to struggle against *the actually existing* counter-revolution and the treachery of *the existing* Soviets. Lenin regarded the Soviets as the greatest gain of the Revolution, as the most rational form of political organisation of the people and foresaw that they were to play a great part in the future and that they would become the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In his article "On Slogans", Lenin wrote: "Soviets may appear in this new revolution, and indeed are bound to, but *not* the present Soviets, not organs collaborating with the bourgeoisie, but organs of revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie. It is true that then too we shall be in favour of building the whole state on the model of the Soviets."<sup>3</sup>

The resolution "The Current Situation" adopted by the Sixth Congress stated that the Bolshevik Party must (a) assume the role of the vanguard fighter against the counter-revolution in order to protect all mass organisations, especially the Soviets, from the enveloping reaction, (b) retain and strengthen the positions that had been won in these bodies by the internationalist wing, and (c) fight actively to increase the Party's influence in the Soviets and to unite all elements in them which could be united against the forces of counter-revolution.<sup>4</sup>

The consistent implementation by all Party organisations of the decisions of the Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and Lenin's directives on the Soviets was one of the most important conditions for ensuring the transition of the Soviets to revolutionary positions.

<sup>1</sup> *The Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.). Minutes*, p. 116 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 189.

<sup>4</sup> *C.P.S.U. in Resolutions*, Part I, p. 376 (Russ. ed.).

### 3. THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SOVIETS IN THE SUMMER OF 1917. THE FURTHER BOLSHEVISING OF THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES

It was not only the Cadets who tried to take advantage of the temporary defeat of the revolutionary forces in July. The Right-wing groups of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s also wanted to oust the Bolsheviks from the Soviets in order to turn them once and for all into obedient tools of the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government.

In the Kolpino District of Petrograd the S.R.s attempted to provoke the workers into taking action against the Bolsheviks, and in Porokhovo they succeeded in expelling six Bolshevik delegates from the district Soviet. The S.R.s behaved in the same way in the Vasil'yevsky Island, Neva and Zheleznodorozhny districts.<sup>1</sup>

The struggle between the Bolsheviks and the S.R. and Menshevik bloc became more intense in the Soviets throughout the country too. In Saratov, when the question of the Soviet's attitude to the July events came under discussion at one of its meetings, Telegin, a member of the S.R. Party's city committee made a false statement about the Bolsheviks inspired by hatred for the proletariat and the Bolshevik Party. The leader of the Bolshevik faction of the Soviet M. I. Vasilyev (Yuzhin) then explained to the deputies that the Right-wing S.R. leaders were trying "to put a wedge" between the Bolsheviks and the working masses.<sup>2</sup>

The conciliators in the Yekaterinoslav Soviet tried to stage a sort of "trial" of the Bolsheviks. The Right-wing S.R. Zateishchikov stated: "We must fight against Bolshevik anarchy (!) using the same means that we used in the fight against the old regime." The Bolshevik deputies E. I. Kviring and S. I. Gopner protested against the unworthy behaviour in the Soviet of such "socialists", and defended Lenin's assessment of the July political crisis.<sup>3</sup>

The conciliators' C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies "led" the attacks on the Bolsheviks both in the Soviets of the capital and throughout the country. They protested against Lenin's refusal to give himself up to Kerensky's "justice" and demanded that the Bolshevik faction in the C.E.C. "immediately and categorically condemn the actions of

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, pp. 161-65 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Saratov Soviet of Workers' Deputies (1917-1918)*, pp. 162-63 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Zvezda* (The Star), Yekaterinoslav, July 8, 1917.

its leaders".<sup>1</sup> The top leadership of petty-bourgeois democracy and the Cadet counter-revolution were now fully merged. To give their actions an appearance of legitimacy the S.R. and Menshevik leaders pulled through the C.E.C. a resolution depriving deputies who were suspected by the Provisional Government of having been involved in "the July mutiny" of the right to work on executive committees. The C.E.C. also required all deputies of both central and local Soviets "to carry out unconditionally all the decisions taken by the majority of the central all-Russia bodies",<sup>2</sup> i.e., by the S.R. and Menshevik majority that had handed over power to the counter-revolution.

The Bolsheviks replied to this in a statement to the July 16 joint session of the C.E.C. and the E.C. of the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies which read as follows: "We recognise that every member of the Soviet, as a representative of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, must carry out the decisions taken by the majority of the Soviet. But the right to criticise the decision of the majority must be retained both for individual Soviets and for individual members of the Soviets."<sup>3</sup>

Having failed in their attempt to drive the Bolsheviks out of the Soviets by political blackmail, the Right-wing S.R. and Menshevik leaders tried another manoeuvre. In the May-June elections to the Soviets the Mensheviks and the S.R.s had done their best to prevent voters from exercising their right to vote. They knew that in the conditions that then existed truly free and universal elections would not bring them the results they desired. But when the period of dual power came to an end the petty-bourgeois parties changed their tactics. The joint July 13 meeting of the C.E.C. and the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies decided to hold elections as soon as possible to the whole of the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>4</sup>

The Bolshevik newspaper *Rabochy i Soldat* commented on the plans of the conciliators in an editorial entitled "Concerning the New Elections to the Petrograd Soviet", which said: "In the atmosphere of slanders and baiting of the Bolsheviks, the S.R.s and the Mensheviks want to push their own followers through to the Soviet and to drive out all those who do not want to unite with them for the purpose of supporting the bourgeoisie."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, July 14, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, July 22, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, July 14, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Rabochy i Soldat* (Worker and Soldier), July 24, 1917.

The proposed fresh elections to the Soviet were discussed at the Second Petrograd All-City Party Conference. M. M. Volodarsky, in a report to the conference, said that the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, carried away by the "victory" of July 3-4, were insisting on holding elections immediately in the hope of capturing the Petrograd Soviet entirely. In the course of the debate on Volodarsky's report measures of struggle against the conciliators' plans were worked out. The conference decided to put the stress of their propaganda work on agitation among the soldiers, as the soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet was larger in number than the workers' section.

In late July the question of the forthcoming elections of deputies from the Petrograd garrison troops to the Petrograd Soviet was discussed at a joint meeting of the Army Organisation of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and representatives of the regimental and other soldiers' committees. It was pointed out at the meeting that the soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet consisted largely of "defencists" and that it was thus lagging behind politically. The meeting decided that the active participation of the masses of the soldiers in the elections to the Soviet was essential.<sup>1</sup>

As they overcame the consequences of the blows dealt them by the counter-revolution of July 3-5, the Bolsheviks resumed their organisational and political work among the people. In the Lenin-grad Party Archives is to be found a register of meetings, reports and lectures held by the City Committee from early July to the middle of October 1917. These brief notes, made on each occasion the Bolsheviks spoke to the people, prove convincingly that the workers of Petrograd followed the Bolshevik Party even in this most hard time for the Party, a time when the forces of counter-revolution were indulging in an orgy of persecution and mass arrests. Let us quote from the register:

"July 20. Possel Factory (Vasilyevsky Island). Meeting of representatives of factories, troops and delegates from the front lines. 3,000 present. Speaker, Volodarsky. Bolshevik resolution adopted unanimously with 8 abstentions.

"July 24. Putilov Works. 6,000 people heard a report on the current situation. Bolshevik resolution adopted unanimously. The audience gave the opposition almost no chance to speak.

"July 28. The Gesler plant. Meeting devoted to the new elections to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Report given on

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in July 1917. The July Crisis*, pp. 223-24. (Russ. ed.).

the current situation. The Bolshevik mandate elected by an overwhelming majority.

"August 11. G. K. Orjonikidze spoke at a general meeting at the Putilov Works. Resolutions against the Provisional Government, against the closure of the *Worker and Soldier*, against the Moscow Session, etc. 10,000-12,000 present.... One day's wages to the workers' press.

"August 19. G. K. Orjonikidze spoke at a meeting in the Moscow District devoted to the elections to the City Duma. About 5,000 present. Splendid! They would not allow the Menshevik-Internationalists to get a word in!"<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviks' organisational and political work began to yield results. Shortly after the July 3-5 events the Kolomenskoye and Novaya Derevnya District Party committees discussed reports on the situation in local factories. New elections of deputies to the district Soviet had been held at the Franco-Russian plant and all three deputies elected were Bolsheviks, whereas formerly there had been only Mensheviks and S.R.s.<sup>2</sup> Before July the Lebedev Works had been a stronghold of the S.R.s. But after the shooting up of the peaceful demonstration on July 3 the mood of the workers changed and they elected a Bolshevik to replace the S.R. who represented them in the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>3</sup> A general workers' meeting at the Langensiepen Factory on July 14 also decided to hold fresh elections of deputies to the Petrograd Soviet and to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Petrograd District. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s were opposed to this election but the workers overruled them. 850 voted for the Bolsheviks' list, while the Mensheviks and S.R.s collected only 215 votes. Formerly the factory had been represented in the Petrograd Soviet by one Bolshevik and one S.R. Now, in a secret ballot both to the Petrograd City and the District Soviets only Bolsheviks were elected.

The strengthened Bolshevik influence in the district Soviets of Petrograd resulted in changes in the party composition and in the line of the Inter-District Conference of Soviets. Its Bolshevik faction grew considerably, uniting experienced, steeled fighters who enjoyed great authority among the workers. They included V. K. Slutskaya, D. Z. Manuilsky, S. M. Nakhimson, M. Y. Latsis, A. K. Skorokhodov, V. N. Pavlov, P. A. Kulinenkov, S. M. Korchagin, V. N. Tvorogov, A. A. Yurkin, E. E. Essen and many others. The Bolshevik A. M. Gorin replaced the Menshevik V. A. Anisi-

<sup>1</sup> L.P.A., File 1.

<sup>2</sup> L.P.A., File 1817.

<sup>3</sup> L.P.A., File 13.

mov, an E.C. member of the Petrograd Soviet, as chairman of the Interdistrict Conference of Soviets, and the Bolsheviks M. Y. Latsis and D. Z. Manuilsky became deputy chairmen and K. G. Flakserman secretary. Y. M. Sverdlov also took a constant part in the work of the Interdistrict Conference.<sup>1</sup>

In early August the Interdistrict Conference adopted an "Instruction" outlining both the structure and the direction of the work of this important Soviet organisation. It stated that "the Interdistrict Conference co-ordinates the activities of the district Soviets of the city of Petrograd, serves as a liaison centre, and determines the direction in which they work".<sup>2</sup>

By August the Interdistrict Conference had therefore, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, become both an organisational and a political centre for the district Soviets, a centre that opposed the S.R. and Menshevik majority of the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet.

The S.R.s and the Mensheviks tried to hold back the steady growth of the Bolsheviks' influence in the Soviets by the direct violation of democratic principles. After the July 3-5 events the leaders of the conciliatory majority no longer convened plenary meetings of the Petrograd Soviet, and its Executive Committee became merely an auxiliary organ of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies. The S.R.s stated that "the work of the Soviet has died down as a result of the Executive Committee and its whole apparatus entering the C.E.C."<sup>3</sup>

It was only after a month's interval (on August 7) that the workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet gathered together to discuss what attitude to take toward the mass arrests of Bolsheviks and other revolutionary-minded workers and soldiers, to the introduction of capital punishment at the front lines by the Provisional Government and to the new elections to the Soviet.

It was becoming obvious to many deputies that only alterations in the composition of the Petrograd Soviet would invigorate its work. The workers' section therefore came out for early general elections to the Soviet.<sup>4</sup> But this demand was not of itself enough. The Bolsheviks went further and fought for the full implementation of democracy in the elections. At the outset of the revolution the

<sup>1</sup> *The Petrograd Bolsheviks in the October Revolution*, pp. 117, 258, 430, 438, 439, 441 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 101.

<sup>3</sup> *Minutes of the Meeting of the S.R. Faction of the Petrograd Soviet on August 2, 1917*, C.P.A. I.M.L., File 274.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 24, 1917.

leaders of the conciliatory parties had established the ratio of one deputy per thousand workers. The Bolsheviks suggested extending this rule to the Army, but the Mensheviks and S.R.s resisted. They tried to prove the need to retain the existing system of representation (one delegate from each company and equivalent unit) on the grounds that the numbers of workers and soldiers in the Petrograd Soviet had been in recent times almost equal and that a new rate would lead to "a wrong relationship between the Soviet and the garrison".

The workers' section then made a compromise suggestion: that each company and equivalent unit send one representative to the Soviet, but only one per thousand should have voting rights, the rest serving in an advisory capacity. In this way each army unit would maintain its contact with the Petrograd Soviet. But even this perfectly acceptable proposal did not suit the conciliators and the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the soldiers' section were able to have the existing system of election retained.<sup>1</sup>

In this connection *Pravda* published an article by Lenin with the title "Violations of Democracy in Mass Organisations". Lenin wrote: "We must pass a resolution branding as a *fraud* worthy of Nicholas II such practices as those of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies (the soldiers have one representative to every 500 people, while the workers have 1 : 1,000). . . . We must pass a resolution demanding *equal suffrage*."<sup>2</sup> But it was a considerable time before the Bolsheviks succeeded in making the representation of the workers and the soldiers in the Petrograd Soviet truly equal.

Guided by the resolutions of the Sixth Party Congress and by Lenin's instructions the Bolsheviks continued the fight to extend their influence in the Soviets and other mass bodies, taking particular care to improve the work of their factions in the Soviets. The committees of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) in Vologda, Tver, Kaluga, Yaroslavl and other places gave systematic attention to the Bolsheviks' organisational and political work in the Soviets and this produced favourable changes in the party composition of deputies.

By late July the Kronstadt Soviet numbered 320 deputies—106 Bolsheviks, 100 S.R.s (mostly Left-wing), 45 Mensheviks and 69 non-party.<sup>3</sup> L. A. Bregman, a Bolshevik Party member since 1914, was elected chairman of the E.C. of the Soviet.

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 26, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 304.

<sup>3</sup> The Credentials of the Delegates to the Sixth Party Congress in *The Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Minutes*, p. 319 (Russ. ed.).

In the second half of August fresh elections to the Kharkov Soviet of Workers' Deputies and to its executive committee were held. The Bolsheviks received 120 seats, three times as many as in the March-April election.<sup>1</sup> They also won 12 seats (30%) on the E.C. of the Soviet. The S.R.s and Mensheviks received together 190 seats in the Soviet and 25 on the E.C. with the help of the votes of artisans, white-collar workers and the workers of small enterprises.<sup>2</sup> The S.R.s and Mensheviks thus still held the Kharkov Soviet but their grip was not to last much longer.

The S.R.s were the initiators of new elections to some Soviets where they counted not only on retaining their former positions but also on strengthening them at the expense of the Bolsheviks. For instance the S.R.s in Revel proposed early elections and got the support of the Bolshevik faction. The Revel Soviet voted for holding elections before August 1.<sup>3</sup> The returns, however, were a disappointment for the conciliators. The workers, soldiers and sailors of Revel were now beginning to break away from the defencists and joining up with the Bolsheviks. The July election resulted in the growth of the Bolshevik faction to 76, over one-third of all deputies.<sup>4</sup>

The steady line pursued by the Bolsheviks in following Lenin's programme of gradually winning over the Soviets and the soldiers' and peasants' committees ensured that the party composition and the line followed not only by individual Soviets but also by the regional associations of Soviets changed with time. The Second Regional Congress of the Urals Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, held in Yekaterinburg from August 17 to 21, represented 69 Soviets uniting over half a million workers and soldiers. The party composition of the 154 delegates was: 77 Bolsheviks and Internationalists, about 40 S.R.s, and 23 Mensheviks. Finding themselves in the minority the conciliators tried to have the congress called off. The Mensheviks declared at a private meeting on August 16 that the congress was "invalid" with its existing composition. When their attempt to wreck the congress failed the defencist Mensheviks and Right-wing S.R.s left. The remaining delegates described their behaviour as "betrayal of the interests of that sec-

<sup>1</sup> V. Y. Borshchevsky, *The Working Class and the Soviets of the Donets-Krivoi Rog Basin in the October Revolution*, p. 189 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lobakhan, *The Fourth Kharkov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (from March to August 20, 1917)*, Moscow, 1946, p. 235 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Estonia*, p. 161 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Zvezda*, Revel, August 15, 1917.

tion of the Urals proletariat which elected them." 11 people, including seven Bolsheviks and three S.R.s, were elected to the new E.C. of the Urals Regional Soviet.<sup>1</sup>

This Second Congress of the Urals Soviets was of great national significance, for it was the first regional congress led entirely by the Bolsheviks and it demonstrated the growth in the people's political consciousness. On the closing day of the congress the Urals Regional Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) issued a leaflet entitled "To All Party Organisations and Party Members in the Urals". It summed up the tremendous organisational and political work done by the Urals Bolshevik organisations in the six months of the revolution. The results had indeed been quite great. The Regional Bolshevik Party Committee was happy to declare that "the turning point in the maturing of our workers' minds has come, the hard times of the domination of the conciliators are over and the idea of the international brotherhood of the proletariat and the world-wide struggle for socialism is gaining in strength".<sup>2</sup>

The Bolsheviks also won a big victory at the Second West Siberian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, held in Omsk from August 11 to 20. The Soviets of the Altai, Tobol and Tomsk gubernias and of the Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk regions were represented. The delegates consisted of 50 Social-Democrats (united) and 56 S.R.s. Formally the S.R.s were in the majority but in fact the Bolsheviks led.<sup>3</sup> The division between the Bolsheviks (and those Internationalists who backed them) and the defencist Mensheviks and Right-wing S.R.s became apparent in the debate on the organisation of power and the congress's attitude to the coalition Provisional Government. Three resolutions were put forward: a Bolshevik one, a Menshevik-Internationalist one and one from the Right-wing S.R.s. The congress voted twice. The Bolshevik resolution was carried on the second vote by 52 to 38. This stated that the Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Western Siberia regarded as its major demand "the transfer of all state power into the hands of the majority of revolutionary democracy organised in the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ural'skaya Pravda*, August 21 and 24, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Urals Bolsheviks in the Struggle for the Victory of the October Socialist Revolution*, Collection of Documents, Sverdlovsk, 1957, pp. 147-48 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 70.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15; *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Second West Siberian Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Omsk, 1917, pp. 75-76 (Russ. ed.).

Finally, the congress elected a West Siberian Regional Executive Committee of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The Bolsheviks were represented on this body by prominent fighters for Soviet power in Siberia and the Altai such as A. Z. Zvezdov, Z. I. Lobkov and others.<sup>1</sup>

The strengthening of the position of the Bolsheviks in the Soviets in July-August 1917 was a factor of major importance. It indicated the steadily growing authority of the Bolshevik Party among all sections of the working people. "Reality shows us clearly," said Lenin, "that it was after the July days that the majority of the people began quickly to go over to the side of the Bolsheviks."<sup>2</sup>

In the period after the July events there was a further spread of the Soviets in the national areas. This was essential for the continued advance of the revolution. The Provisional Government's policy of oppressing the peoples of Russia, its provocations in relation to Finland, the Ukraine and the other national territories aroused their working peoples to fight for their national and social freedom. The workers and peasants of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic Area, the Transcaucasian Area and Central Asia were the allies of the Russian proletariat in the battle for Soviet power. In the interests of the vast majority of the peoples of Russia's national areas it was necessary to direct the development of their spontaneous creative initiative towards building and strengthening the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants', Agricultural Labourers' and other deputies, and local Bolshevik organisations did a great amount of work to this end.

The Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies of Estonia held a congress in Revel on July 22-27. Delegates came from the Revel, Tartu, Pyarnu, Narva and other Soviets, and representatives of the North Baltic Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), the Revel Committee of the S.R. Party and the Revel Committee of the Popular Socialist Party of Labour also took part in it.<sup>3</sup> The congress adopted a resolution setting up a Regional Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies of Estonia and elected an All-Estonia Executive Committee led by a prominent worker at the Revel R.S.D.L.P.(B.) organisation, Y. Y. Anvelt.<sup>4</sup>

In late July, on the initiative of the Riga Soviet, an All-Latvia Soviet of Workers', Landless Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies was

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Second West Siberian Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, p. 98; C.P.A. I.M.L., File 70.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Estonia*, pp. 158, 160, 512 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 571.

established. 66 delegates from almost every uyezd took part in its work. It elected an executive committee of 27 people.<sup>1</sup>

Following the decisions of the Sixth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), the Bolsheviks worked among the poorest peasants and field hands and helped these numerous strata of the population to establish and strengthen their own class organisations. An All-Estonia Conference of Landless Peasants was held in Revel on August 13-15, called by the North Baltic Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and chaired by the Bolshevik V. Velman, 45 delegates attended, representing 40,000 agricultural workers. This All-Estonia Conference declared itself the Provisional Soviet of Landless and Poor Peasants' Deputies.<sup>2</sup>

The national bourgeoisie tried to take advantage of the Provisional Government's onslaught on the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. In the summer of 1917 the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Radas stepped up their activities, as did the All-Russia Moslem Council throughout most of the country, the Dashnaksutyun in the Caucasus, the counter-revolutionary Alash-Orda in Kazakhstan and the Shura-i-Islamia in Uzbekistan.

The Bolsheviks opposed this wave of bourgeois nationalism and isolationism with the slogan of proletarian internationalism, friendship between nations and the united struggle of all nations against their oppressors. The Bolshevik faction in the Central Ukrainian Rada declared that "the working people will get their freedom not by national unity with the bourgeoisie but by class struggle, not by national alliance but by the international brotherhood of workers".<sup>3</sup>

While the Central Byelorussian Rada was holding its first session on August 5-6, the Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies passed a resolution exposing the plans of the bourgeois nationalists and demanding that Russia be declared a Democratic Republic, that capital punishment be abolished immediately and that the State Duma and the State Council be dissolved.<sup>4</sup> The Moldavian Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies also protested angrily against the anti-popular actions of the Provisional Government.

Soviets of Deputies continued to be organised in Central Asia. In

July the E.C. of the Kustanai Soviet of Peasants' and Kirghiz<sup>1</sup> Deputies reported: "At the present time Soviets of Peasants' and Kirghiz Deputies have been set up in almost all the volosts (nomad communities) of the uyezd."<sup>2</sup> The Provisional Government's agents were forced to admit the popularity of the Soviets among the native population of Central Asia. The Prosecutor of Tashkent District Court wrote that the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies "have acquired major importance in the Syr-Darya Region among the local people and in local political life" and that they were the only bodies whose authority was respected by the people. The prosecutor felt convinced that the Soviets were "in a position to uphold their demands not only in words but by deeds".<sup>3</sup>

All the facts testified to the growth in the viability of the Soviets at the time. The movement for the setting up of Soviets never once slackened. According to the data of the C.E.C., the country had about 600 Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies in August, almost double the number in June.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4. THE SOVIETS AND THE MOSCOW STATE CONFERENCE

After crushing the July demonstration in Petrograd the Provisional Government decided to convene a so-called state conference of representatives of public bodies in Moscow. According to the official version the Conference was to promote "the unification of state power and of all the organised forces of the nation".<sup>5</sup> What the convening of the State Conference really meant was indicated by Lenin when he described it as the "coronation" of the counter-revolutionary government in Moscow".<sup>6</sup>

The decision to call the State Conference in Moscow met with the approval of the entire bourgeoisie. The Second Congress of the All-

<sup>1</sup> Later the people living in the areas now included in the Kazakh S.S.R. came to be called not the Kirghiz but the Kazakh, which is correct historically.

<sup>2</sup> *The Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Kazakhstan, 1917-1918*, Collection of Documents and Materials, Alma-Ata, 1957, pp. 117-18 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Preparing for and Carrying Through the Great October Socialist Revolution in Uzbekistan*, Collection of Documents and Materials, Tashkent, 1957, pp. 84-98 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 26, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Register of Provisional Government Proceedings*, July 31, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, pp. 206-07.

<sup>1</sup> *The October Revolution in Latvia*, Documents and Materials, Riga, 1957, pp. 12, 175, 181, 425 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Estonia*, pp. 184-201 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Ukrainian Bolshevik Organisations in the Period of Preparing for and Carrying Through the Great October Socialist Revolution (March-November 1917)*, pp. 711-13 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Byelorussia*, Vol. I, pp. 539-42 (Russ. ed.).

Russia Union of Trade and Industry took place on August 3-5. Representatives of the War Industries Committees, of the Council of the Congress of Representatives of Industry and Trade, of the mine owners of Southern Russia, Stock Exchange committees, the All-Russia Society of Sugar Factory Owners, and other bourgeois organisations, including members of the State Duma, took part. The Congress agreed to participate in the Moscow State Conference in order to make a public declaration that "at the present moment the social system must not be subjected to changes"(!).<sup>1</sup>

The climax of the Congress was a speech by the chairman of the All-Russia Union of Trade and Industry, the Moscow factory owner and millionaire P. P. Ryabushinsky. Admitting that the Provisional Government and its socialist ministers were helpless in the face of the growing revolutionary movement, Ryabushinsky called on his audience to stop the advance of this movement by using not only the state machinery of suppression but economic measures, too, i.e., he urged them to disorganise the national economy: "Let the bony hand of hunger and national poverty catch the false friends of the people—the members of the various sorts of committees and Soviets—by the throat..."<sup>2</sup>

The Council of Public Men met after the Trade and Industry Congress, also in Moscow. Factory owners, generals and the leaders of the Cadets and Octobrists attended. The meeting proposed forming a "non-party" government, "independent of committees and Soviets", capable of guaranteeing protection to private property and stronger discipline in the Army. The name of General L. G. Kornilov was mentioned as the future military dictator of Russia and the meeting sent him a cable expressing their loyal feelings. The bourgeoisie then created a permanent Bureau for the Organisation of Public Forces, i.e., a legal centre of counter-revolution.<sup>3</sup>

In early August a congress of Provisional Government gubernia commissars took place in Petrograd. The Cadets demanded the earliest possible abolition of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, and the granting to the Government's commissars of the power and authority which governor-generals had under the tsar.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Economic Position of Russia on the Eve of the Great October Socialist Revolution (March-October 1917)*, Part 1, Collection of Documents and Materials, Moscow-Leningrad, 1957, pp. 196-201 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 583.

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, August 11, 1917; *Russkiye Vedomosti*, August 10, 1917; *Rech*, August 10 and 12, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Rech*, August 5, 1917.

The Knights of St. George, the Council of the Union of Cossack Troops, the Union of the Army and Navy Officers and other Army bodies were active in preparing for the State Conference. The commanders-in-chief of all fronts met at General Headquarters for a secret conference on July 16 with Prime Minister Kerensky and Foreign Minister Tereshchenko participating. The latter agreed with Kornilov's men that it was necessary to have "responsible and firm rule", i.e., a military dictatorship.

The aims pursued by the State Conference determined the choice of its participants. According to the available data more than 2,500 people attended it.<sup>1</sup> The Cadets and the other even more Right-wing parties were in the absolute majority. The organisations of "revolutionary democracy" were represented only by a small group of Mensheviks, S.R.s and non-party people. The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies of the Moscow garrison were allowed to send 10 delegates each, the Moscow Gubernia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies five delegates and the Moscow Regional Bureau of Soviets none.

The conciliators determined the attitude of the central Soviet organs to the State Conference. The S.R. faction of the Petrograd Soviet spoke for active participation in it in order "to call on the vital forces of all classes of the population to make sacrifices in defence of the revolution [!]. The S.R.s also advanced a reformist programme for presentation at the Conference.<sup>2</sup>

Both the Mensheviks and the S.R.s urged workers and soldiers to meet, to pass resolutions and to send them together with their mandates to the representatives of "revolutionary democracy" at the State Conference. They also recommended that resolutions expressing confidence in the Provisional Government should be sent to the C.E.C., to the Socialist Ministers and to the Moscow Regional Bureau of Soviets.<sup>3</sup> So instead of organising a protest campaign against the counter-revolutionary gathering the petty-bourgeois socialists initiated a campaign of support for the "coronation" of the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government.

Aware of the Bolsheviks' negative attitude to the State Conference, the leaders of the S.R. and Menshevik bloc prevented them from speaking at it and from putting forward their programme in defence of the Soviets by laying down rules for the delegation of the C.E.C.

<sup>1</sup> *The State Conference: Shorthand Records*, p. 308 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the Meeting of the S.R. Faction of the Petrograd Soviet on August 9, 1917*, C.P.A. I.M.L., File 274.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683; S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

of the Soviets strictly controlling the activities of delegates. These required that the members of the delegation "refrained" from speaking either in their own capacity or on behalf of one or another party faction without the consent of the Presidium of the C.E.C.<sup>1</sup> The Bolsheviks could not, of course, agree to such "rules" and refused to participate as members of the general C.E.C. delegation.

The conciliators grossly violated the rights of the 14 Bolshevik members of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets who went to Moscow to read a statement at the opening of the State Conference by withdrawing their mandates. The letter of protest which V. P. Nogin delivered to the Presidium of the State Conference read: "We regard the withdrawal of our mandates as a gross violation of all our rights both as representatives of the most active section of the proletariat and as members of the C.E.C. We consider that if this attitude is taken by the whole of the C.E.C. delegation it will be turned into a factional gathering of the S.R.s and the Mensheviks."<sup>2</sup>

The Bolshevik Party discussed the question of the State Conference three times between August 6 and August 20 at full meetings of the Central Committee and at smaller sittings of C.C. members. Bolshevik organisations were instructed to expose the Conference as a conspiratorial body of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, to tear the mask off the S.R.s and Mensheviks in collusion with the Cadets, and to organise a mass protest movement of the workers, peasants and soldiers.<sup>3</sup>

Many Soviets became noticeably more active at this time, particularly the Petrograd and Moscow district Soviets. On August 10 a plenary meeting of the Soviet of the Kolomenskoye District of Petrograd authorised its E.C. to hold protest meetings together with other revolutionary organisations against the State Conference. The deputies were advised to be guided in their explanatory work by the following points: 1) the Moscow Conference was intended to fake the opinion of the broad sections of the population and was a product of the intrigues of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie; 2) the line taken by the leaders of the C.E.C. on the Conference was unacceptable and detrimental to the cause of the revolution; 3) the workers must not remain silent at such a decisive time.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 11, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, August 13, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) (August 1917–February 1918), Moscow, 1958, pp. 7, 12, 13, 27.

<sup>4</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 8878.

The Vasilyevsky Island and Petrograd District Soviets came out against the attempts of the Provisional Government and the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the C.E.C. to present the Moscow Conference of counter-revolutionaries as "a gathering with nation-wide representation". The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Petrograd District declared that the members of the Petrograd (City.—A. A.) Soviet who had gone to Moscow did not represent the workers and therefore could not be regarded as official delegates. The Petrograd District Soviet appealed to the workers and soldiers to call meetings to protest vigorously against any fresh intrigues on the part of the counter-revolutionaries.<sup>1</sup>

In Moscow the movement of protest against the counter-revolutionary Conference was led by the E.C. of the Sushchevo-Maryino-District Soviet, which appealed to all district Soviet E.C.s to meet urgently in order to decide what practical action should be taken on the opening day of the State Conference. The deputies of the Sushchevo-Maryino Soviet passed a resolution which said: "Bearing in mind that this Congress [the State Conference.—A. A.] consists largely of counter-revolutionaries and that it is incapable of expressing the will of the majority . . . we suggest that the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies consider the matter. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

The appeal of the Sushchevo-Maryino Soviet was discussed by almost all the districts of Moscow and most district Soviets approved it. This alarmed the Mensheviks and the S.R.s who then tried to put pressure on the districts to change their attitude to the Conference. A joint meeting of the Zamoskvorechye District Soviet and local factory committees was to take place on August 10. The S.R.-Menshevik leaders of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Moscow Regional Bureau of the Soviets realised that the decisions that were to be taken by the proletarian Zamoskvorechye District would have a great influence on all Moscow workers and on the soldiers of the garrison. They therefore decided to send a strong representation to the District Soviet meeting. The Menshevik Romanov represented the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the S.R. Rybalsky the Moscow Regional Bureau. They agitated for the participation of "revolutionary democracy" in the State Conference and called on the workers to support the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets in their efforts "to unite" the workers, soldiers and the peasants "with the propertied classes" (with

<sup>1</sup> *Proletary*, August 13 and 24, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 73.

the latter leading). Above all they pleaded with the workers not to protest against the Moscow Conference in any way.

The Menshevik and S.R. factions of the Zamoskvorechye District Soviet supported their leaders but the delegates of the workers were not so impressed. They followed what the members of the Bolshevik faction had to say with great interest. The Bolsheviks told them what the real intentions of those who had organised this "nation-wide gathering" were. The Bolshevik S. A. Smirnov, an E.C. member of the Zamoskvorechye Soviet, said: "The Moscow Conference is neither the start nor the finish of the counter-revolution. It is the counter-revolution.... How should we struggle against it? First of all we must demonstrate that a powerful, organised and united working class is opposed to the mobilising of the forces of counter-revolution. The most suitable reply to the Moscow Conference would be a strike."<sup>1</sup> The Mensheviks protested, but after a stormy debate 186 voted for the resolution of the Bolshevik faction, 41 for the Menshevik resolution and 48 for that of the S.R.s.<sup>2</sup> The one-day strike proposed by the Bolsheviks was supported by the Gorodskoy, Rogozhsko-Simonovsky and Zhelezodorozhny District Soviets and by the Central Trade Union Bureau and other workers' organisations.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the Soviets in the Central Industrial Area also protested against the Moscow Conference, and the Moscow Regional Bureau of the Soviets received cables from more than 60 towns and districts in the week before it met.<sup>4</sup>

The Right-wing S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the Moscow Regional Bureau and of the Moscow Soviet failed to take account of the negative attitude of the majority of the Soviets of the Moscow Region to the calling of the counter-revolutionary Conference. A meeting of the E.C. of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies on August 9 decided 1) not to pass any resolutions relating to the Moscow Conference; 2) to delegate one representative from each faction to the Central Trade Union Bureau meeting; 3) to hold a meeting of the E.C.s of the City Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on August 10 and to invite representatives from the district Soviets to attend in an *advisory capacity* (three from each district).<sup>5</sup> This meeting was the scene of a sharp clash between the Bolsheviks

and the S.R. and Menshevik bloc. Speaking on behalf of the Central Trade Union Bureau the Bolshevik Y. M. Poznansky read a resolution adopted at a joint meeting of the Bureau and the representatives of 28 trade union executive councils on August 7. Moscow's 300,000 organised workers declared: "The convocation of the Moscow Conference has brought into being an organised centre of counter-revolution and this makes it essential to conduct a campaign of protest and to hold a one-day strike."<sup>1</sup>

This proposal of the Central Trade Union Bureau was supported by the delegates of the Basmanny, Butyrsky, Gorodskoy, Danilovsky, Zhelezodorozhny, Zamoskvorechye, Lefortovo-Blagushinsky and Rogozhsko-Simonovsky district Soviets. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s opposed the idea of a strike, claiming that though the Moscow Conference had no legislative powers, "revolutionary democracy" must present its demands to the Provisional Government at the Conference.

The Bolsheviks of the Moscow Soviet defended the demands of the district Soviets and of the Central Trade Union Bureau. Addressing his remarks to the workers' deputies, V. P. Nogin said: "The State Conference is being convened here because the Government supposes that the Moscow proletariat is less revolutionary than the Petrograd one.... What are we to do? We must protest against this plot to substitute the opinions of the nation for those of a small handful...."<sup>2</sup>

Since the delegates of the district Soviets were not given full voting rights the conciliators succeeded in getting passed a resolution against the holding of a one-day strike in Moscow by 46 votes to 18, with seven abstentions.<sup>3</sup>

A combined session of the full Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies took place on August 11. The struggle between the party factions continued at this meeting. The Menshevik Kibrik who spoke for the conciliators charged the Bolshevik organisations and the trade unions with "disorganising the labour movement and introducing discord into revolutionary democracy". P. G. Smidovich spoke next and said that the Mensheviks were wasting their time trying to distort the truth about the existing situation in the country. The bourgeoisie had got into a far stronger position than before, the position of democracy had weakened, and the

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 78.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., File 66.

<sup>4</sup> *The Preparations for and the Victory of the October Revolution in Moscow*, pp. 244-45, 247, 248 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66. (Italics mine.—A. A.)

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the History of the October Revolution in Moscow*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927, pp. 255-56 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Soviets' links with the people had become slack. Counter-revolution was mobilising its forces all along the line while the Provisional Government did nothing to implement the programme it had outlined. Instead it was calling a phoney meeting in Moscow to get the support of "the living forces" of counter-revolution so that it could jettison the revolutionary proletariat.<sup>1</sup>

Smidovich's speech made a deep impression on the deputies of the Moscow Soviet. In order to weaken its effect the conciliators wanted to limit the time for debate and to have the vote taken as soon as possible. The Bolsheviks objected to this and demanded that the district delegates and the representatives of the Central Trade Union Bureau and other bodies be given a chance to speak. In the course of the debate it transpired that the great majority of Moscow's workers already understood the need to hold a general strike as the best means of protesting against the Moscow Conference. The delegates from nearly all the districts spoke in favour of a strike and only a few districts (Khamovniki and Presnya, for example) were waiting to see what the decision of the Moscow Soviet would be on this question.<sup>2</sup>

The strike calls of the Moscow Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), of the Central Trade Union Bureau and of the majority of the district Soviets met with an enthusiastic response from the workers: 150 factories, or 400,000 workers, stopped work on August 12, about 80% of all the workers of Moscow and the areas surrounding it.<sup>3</sup> This powerful demonstration of the Moscow proletariat received the support of the workers of the Central Industrial Area and of the whole country. Ten factories struck on August 12 in Mytishchy (a suburb of Moscow) and five in Pushkino. The Voskresensk textile mill at Naro-Fominsk, the Provodnik plant at Tushino, the gunpowder factory at Cherusti, etc., also went on strike. Meetings and demonstrations were held in Orehovo-Zuyev and Klin. 12,000 workers went on strike in Kostroma and 5,000 of them took part in a march before meeting to adopt a resolution protesting against the Moscow Conference.<sup>4</sup>

Workers, soldiers and peasants were everywhere joining the movement of protest against the counter-revolution. Protest strikes

and mass marches took place in Kiev, Samara, Saratov, Tsaritsyn, Nizhni-Novgorod, Kharkov, Poltava, Gomel, Mozyr, Rechitsa and other towns. The First Regional Conference of the Urals Trade Unions (August 11-15) declared that the agreement of the C.E.C. to take part in this "counter-revolutionary conclave" was a mistake and that the workers of the Urals did not endorse it.<sup>1</sup> The Verkhny Ufalei Soviet also regarded the Moscow Conference as counter-revolutionary and stated that democracy trusted only its own representative organs, the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, and that the latter "must possess full revolutionary power".<sup>2</sup>

The workers' anxiety about the fate of the revolution was not without foundation. The Moscow Conference was no "harmless" gathering of ruling circles as the Mensheviks and the S.R.s tried to present it. This was made quite obvious by the speeches of such outright counter-revolutionaries as Generals Kornilov, Alexeyev and Kaledin, and the leading Cadets Milyukov, Maklakov, Nabokov and Rodichev. The Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov, stated his programme for establishing a military dictatorship in the country. He threatened to give Riga to the Germans and to open up the road to Petrograd to the enemy unless the government stepped up its repressions, introduced capital punishment in the rear as well as at the front lines and further militarised industry and transport. And General Alexeyev, former Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, made a provocative speech in which he blamed the Petrograd Soviet and the soldiers' committees for all the misfortunes that bedevilled the Russian Army during the June offensive.<sup>3</sup>

The Commander of the Don Cossacks, General Kaledin, expressed most clearly the intentions of the counter-revolution. He announced to the stormy applause of all the Right-wing participants in the Conference (the Monarchists, Octobrists, Cadets, clerics, etc.) that the Cossacks "welcomed the determination of the Provisional Government to free itself at last from the pressure of party and class organisations in the reconstruction and government of the country".<sup>4</sup> In other words, what the General wanted was to dissolve the Soviets and the soldiers' committees and to return the Army to the times of Nicholas II.

<sup>1</sup> Y. Ignatov, op. cit., p. 301.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., Files 66, 145.

<sup>3</sup> Essays on the History of the October Revolution in Moscow, p. 256 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 371-72; October in Moscow, Materials and Documents, Moscow-Leningrad 1932, p. 37; Sotsial-Demokrat, August 17, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> Uralskaya Pravda, August 13 and 18, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in August 1917. The Crushing of the Kornilov Revolt, Moscow, 1959, p. 412 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> The State Conference, pp. 3-16, 61-65, 198-206 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-76.

The Cadets (and together with them the Right-wing groups of the S.R.s and the Mensheviks) tried to justify their plans for establishing a military dictatorship and abolishing the working people's own elected political bodies by claiming that since the February Revolution the bourgeois-landowner organs of local government (the Zemstvos, the City Dumas and the rest) had "completely changed" and that these could therefore take the place of the Soviets of Deputies. The Cadet programme for "the renovation of Russia" was supported by the leadership of the S.R. and Menshevik parties. Even in early April *Rabochaya Gazeta* had written: "The Soviets cannot be considered as permanent institutions . . . the future belongs to the City Dumas, the Zemstvos and parliamentary democracy."<sup>1</sup>

Chkheidze and Tsereteli, who spoke after Kornilov and Kaledin, stated the position of the conciliators—a position which represented the height of hypocrisy when compared to the definite and open demands of the Cadets for the abolition of the Soviets and the creation of a military dictatorship. Just as they had done at the All-Russia Conference of Soviets, the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties declared that from the very start the organs of "revolutionary democracy" (i.e., the Soviets of Deputies) had had no intention of taking power but aimed only at "uniting all the vital forces of the nation". Chkheidze assured the Conference that "revolutionary democracy" was prepared "to support any government capable of protecting the interests of the nation and the revolution".<sup>2</sup> He was supported in this by the deputy chairman of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, the Right-wing S.R. G. A. Martynushin, who confirmed that the S.R.s "endorse the statement made by Chkheidze".<sup>3</sup>

The unity of the Mensheviks and the Right-wing S.R.s with the Cadets and their readiness to serve Russian and world imperialism was welcomed by the organisers of the State Conference. The defendant "socialists" assured Rodzyanko, Milyukov, Kornilov and Kaledin that they did not mind the Soviets and the soldiers' and peasants' committees being abolished, merely suggesting "waiting for the right time" as "one should not take away the scaffolding until the building of a free revolutionary [bourgeois.—A. A.] Russia has been completed".<sup>4</sup> The following exchange between Milyukov and Tsere-

teli indicates well enough how the Mensheviks felt on the question of the organisation of state power:

"Milyukov: . . . Tsereteli has just confirmed here that they were not seeking power at that time [May 5-6—A. A.]. . . ."

"Tsereteli: . . . We have never sought power. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The S.R. and Menshevik Declaration of August 14 read by Chkheidze acknowledged the possibility of the Soviets being abolished after "strong organs of local government" had been set up, and appealed for the "resolute stamping out of any manifestations of anarchy", i.e., of the revolutionary movement. It recognised the right of Kerensky and his officials to resort to "extreme measures" against the Bolsheviks and their sympathisers among the workers.<sup>2</sup>

So a new bargain was struck between the S.R.s and Mensheviks and the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and it became necessary to expose the conciliators' actions before the working people. This task was undertaken by the Bolsheviks.

Pressed by the numerous demands of the workers and soldiers and of the district Soviets, the S.R. and Menshevik E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet was forced to call a full meeting of deputies. This took place on August 21 and was a rather stormy meeting. At it the results of the Moscow Conference were summed up and the Soviet's line in connection with the stepped-up offensive of the counter-revolutionary forces was mapped out. All party factions presented draft resolutions. The Mensheviks said that the Moscow State Conference had "united all the forces of democracy on a national platform".<sup>3</sup> The S.R.s were more restrained. They refrained from giving a detailed assessment of the Moscow Conference or on the current situation and appealed to "labouring democracy" to rally closely round its "authoritative organ", the All-Russia Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>4</sup>

The Bolsheviks had to take account of the fact that a large proportion of the workers and the soldiers still trusted the Petrograd Soviet E.C., believing it to be a body that guarded the gains of the revolution. For this reason it was extremely important that they took advantage of the rostrum at the plenary meetings of the Soviet to expose its S.R. and Menshevik majority. The Central Committee of

<sup>1</sup> *Rabochaya Gazeta*, April 11, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The State Conference*, p. 78 (Underlined by me.—A. A.)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 15, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Novaya Zhizn*, August 22, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Dyelo Naroda*, August 22, 1917.

the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) gave the Bolshevik faction of the Petrograd Soviet practical help on this occasion. A commission consisting of Stalin, Dzerzhinsky and Sokolnikov was authorised to examine and if necessary to re-word the draft resolution presented by the Petrograd Soviet faction.<sup>1</sup>

By collective effort a principled party statement was worked out which laid bare the intrigues of the Cadets at the Moscow Conference and the pitiful attempt of the leaders of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies to reconcile "revolutionary democracy" with counter-revolution. The Petrograd Soviet was urged 1) to condemn resolutely the policy of alliance and agreement with the enemies of the proletarian-peasant revolution pursued by the C.E.C. and its delegation at the Moscow Conference; 2) to recognise that the revolution could be saved only by abolishing the counter-revolutionary bourgeois dictatorship and by concentrating power in the hands of the workers and the poorest sections of the peasants; 3) to protest against the Central Executive Committee having participated in the Moscow Conference without first raising the matter for discussion in the Petrograd Soviet of Workers and Soldiers; and to register a protest against the C.E.C. expelling the Bolsheviks from its delegation to the Conference, which could only be regarded as a gross violation of their rights as the representatives of the revolutionary proletariat.<sup>2</sup> The Bolsheviks also pointed out that the Declaration, which Chkhheidze had read at the Moscow Conference and which had been seconded by the S.R.s, was an open betrayal even of the limited programme of the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets. The so-called "revolutionary democracy" had made shameful concessions that were dictated solely by a desire to "conclude 'an honest alliance' with the irreconcilable enemies of the workers and peasants".<sup>3</sup> The August 21 plenum of the Petrograd Soviet rejected this resolution of the Bolshevik faction, but on the next day, when it appeared in print, it met with the enthusiastic approval of the workers in the factories and the soldiers in the barracks.

The central Soviet organs and the Moscow Regional Bureau of the Soviets proved to be incapable of taking action against the

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) (August 1917-February 1918), pp. 26-28.

<sup>2</sup> Proletary, August 22, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution. July 5-November 5, 1917, pp. 131-32 (Russ. ed.).

mobilising of the counter-revolutionary forces around the Moscow Conference. The plans of the counter-revolution to set up a military dictatorship were frustrated not by the leaders of "revolutionary democracy", but by the Moscow working class led by the Bolsheviks with the nation-wide support of all workers and revolutionary-minded soldiers.

It is worth mentioning that the workers did not obey the instruction of the Moscow Soviet banning strike action and held "unofficial" strikes on August 12 even in those districts where the conciliators had succeeded in imposing the instruction on them. In this way the workers demonstrated their opposition to the Moscow City Soviet.<sup>1</sup>

Demands for the election of new deputies to the Moscow City Soviet grew persistent in many places. The Zamoskvorechye and Gorodskoy District Soviets and the workers of the Bogatyr, Brokar and Sokolniki factories, the central power station and the Moscow cart-making workshops all passed resolutions calling for fresh elections. The Bolsheviks backed this initiative of the workers and the district Soviets. After the Moscow State Conference had dispersed the Bolshevik newspaper *The Sotsial-Demokrat* wrote: "The time to fight back against the counter-revolution has come and we must say frankly that our Soviet as it is today is in no shape to take up this struggle . . . those who won't be capable of meeting the critical situation when the Soviet will have to wage war against those counter-revolutionary forces that have already been organised must be recalled. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

The Bolsheviks' warning proved to be only too timely. For in less than a fortnight after the end of the State Conference the bourgeoisie launched a civil war.

## 5. THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES AND THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY MUTINY OF GENERAL KORNILOV

The proletariat's resolute actions during the Moscow State Conference compelled the bourgeoisie to put off the realisation of its plans for the time being. This did not mean that the danger had passed, however. The Cadets went on weaving a web of intrigue

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, August 19, 1917.

while waging a concerted attack on three fronts: the economic, the political and the military. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s objectively helped the industrialists, the bankers and the landowners by indulging in idle talk in the Soviets about the need to have "state control", "accounting", and so on, while life demanded urgent revolutionary-democratic measures to achieve a healthy economy.

On July 19 the C.E.C. of the Soviets met to hear a report from its Economic Department. This did not present too happy a picture. For example, it revealed a sharp decrease in metal production. Of the 64 blast-furnaces in South Russia only 42 were working and that at 75% capacity; and only 67 open hearth furnaces out of 98 were working. The June programme for the production of metal had been only 65% fulfilled and a further reduction was expected in July. Things were even worse in the textile industry. The question was being raised of closing down a number of mills in Moscow and the Moscow area.<sup>1</sup> The socialist ministers who took part in this meeting of the C.E.C. supplemented the report of its Economic Department with their own observations. Minister of Labour M. I. Skobelev remarked: "It is a fact that the economic dislocation is of terrifying proportions." A. V. Peshekhonov, Minister of Food, added: "The future threatens.... They have a 20-day stock of bread in Petrograd and a fortnight's supply in Moscow. The Army at the front has from 45 to as little as 20 days supplies...."<sup>2</sup>

On the insistence of the factory owners the Provisional Government began to implement its provocative plan to "unload" Petrograd. The Metal Workers' Trade Union had information that many of the metal works in Petrograd were to be evacuated to the South and their workers sacked. Seventy-seven plants were closed in the Donets Basin in early August and industrialists were getting ready for mass closures.<sup>3</sup> The total number of factories that came to a standstill between March and July was 568. According to official figures 114,000 workers were registered as unemployed in the Central Industrial Area alone.<sup>4</sup>

The plan for evacuating Petrograd's factories was aimed at introducing chaos into economic life in the hope that the workers would be angered and provoked into taking untimely action and the *avant-*

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, July 20 and 21, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> V. Vladimirova, *Counter-revolution in 1917 (the Kornilov Period)*, Moscow, 1924, p. 28 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *History of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, p. 108 (Russ. ed.).

*garde* of the revolution could be smashed. In his work *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It*, Lenin wrote that the owners had deliberately destroyed the nation's productive forces "hoping that an unparalleled catastrophe will mean the collapse of the republic and democracy, and of the Soviets and proletarian and peasant associations generally".<sup>1</sup>

The preparations for a state coup were being conducted on the pretext of forestalling "the next Bolshevik plot". The bogey of "the danger from the left" which the Mensheviks and the S.R.s had conjured up during the July events was taken up by the Cadets as another weapon in their arsenal.

The bourgeois press was filled with slanderous reports about Lenin and other workers of the Bolshevik Party, the Soviets and the revolutionary committees. The Cadet paper *Rech* regularly published inflammatory articles and commentaries. One of them said: "The capital is in danger of another Bolshevik riot. Out are coming the anonymous organisers of the uprising who are trying to exploit the dissatisfaction and panic that has spread among the population." This myth about "the anonymous organisers" was needed by the Cadets to divert the attention of the workers and the revolutionary-minded soldiers away from the true plotters who were planning to let loose a civil war to clear the way for Kornilov's military dictatorship.

The mutineers intended delivering their main blow at Petrograd. For this purpose they created a special shock force to spearhead the attack, the so-called "Petersburg Army". General Krymov was to be commander. The Cossack General Krasnov was to lead the 3rd Cavalry Corps. Kornilov's men planned to enter Moscow at the same time as they seized Petrograd and with this in view the 7th Orenburg Cossack Regiment had been sent to Moscow from the front lines while the State Conference was still in session.<sup>2</sup>

Counter-revolutionary organisations and the military cadets of the officers' training schools were preparing for combat in Moscow. The main centres of the counter-revolutionary conspiracy were at the South-West Front, in Kiev, on the Don and in certain other areas. Kornilov drew up instructions to the plotters in Kiev on the eve of his attack to dissolve the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and to close down all socialist publications, etc.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 323.

<sup>2</sup> V. Vladimirova, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 5, 1917.

Kerensky was not only fully informed of a possible attempted coup but played a far from passive part in it. Kerensky admitted later in testimony to an investigation committee: "In late July I had already received exact information about the officers' plot that was in preparation and had Petersburg and General Headquarters as its strong-points. . ."<sup>1</sup> This was Kerensky's own "modest" estimate of the part he played in Kornilov's adventure. General Denikin was even more pointed in his memoirs. He stated that Kerensky held all the threads of the conspiracy in his hands in late July and could easily have put an end to it, but he did nothing because he himself had decided to take "the path of open struggle not only against Bolshevism, but also against . . . the Soviets".<sup>2</sup>

Among little-known documents which give an idea of Kerensky's behaviour is a report of the deputy chairman of the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, Shubnikov (an S.R.), who visited General Headquarters after the Kornilov revolt had been crushed. On returning to Moscow, Shubnikov reported that a month before the attempted coup took place the Mogilev Soviet had warned Petrograd (the Provisional Government and the C.E.C. of the Soviets) about the suspicious activities of counter-revolutionary officers; and two or three days before Kornilov's troops actually attacked, the Mogilev Soviet had informed B. V. Savinkov and M. M. Filonenko, assistants to the Minister of War, what was going on. But as they were accomplices in the mutiny they of course took no steps to prevent it.<sup>3</sup>

The Bolshevik press was the only truthful source of information on the intrigues of the Cadets and the counter-revolutionary military clique. The Bolsheviks warned the working people that the danger of a coup had not been removed and that the plotters would continue their plotting in the expectation that a more suitable moment would arise. The newspapers published by the Bolsheviks were of paramount importance in helping the people to understand what was happening and in preventing the organisers of the counter-revolutionary mutiny from lulling the vigilance of the defenders of the revolution.

After Riga had fallen (on August 23) the workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet met to protest at the false charge of treachery which the High Command had levelled against the soldiers of the 12th Army of the Northern Front, and urged the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet to take the necessary

<sup>1</sup> V. Vladimirova, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

<sup>2</sup> General A. I. Denikin, "General Kornilov's Struggle", in *The Kornilov Revolt (White Memoirs)*, Collection of Articles, Leningrad, 1928, pp. 162-63 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66.

steps to protect fighting soldiers from the offensive of the counter-revolutionaries.<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviks supported this action of the workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet, and on August 24 put forward a resolution on the current political situation at a joint session of the C.E.C. and the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies. The dangerous situation at the front was regarded by the Bolsheviks as the result of the Provisional Government's imperialist policy and they believed it to be necessary, in order to save the revolution, to take the following measures: to proclaim a republic by decree without delay; to transfer the land of big estates to the peasants' committees; to introduce workers' control of industry; to do away with repressions and restrictions of the revolutionary forces; to cleanse the Army of counter-revolutionary elements; and to arm the workers. The resolution stressed that only a government which had the support of the workers and the poorest sections of the peasants would be able to carry out such a programme.

The S.R. and Menshevik majority of the C.E.C. and that of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies rejected the Bolsheviks' resolution. Instead they endorsed the Mensheviks' proposal that "organised democracy" should support the measures taken by the Provisional Government in every way.<sup>2</sup> So that literally on the eve of the Kornilov revolt the Mensheviks and the S.R.s committed yet another act of treachery—they covered up Kerensky's provocative actions aimed at weakening the revolutionary forces and making it easy for the plotters. The troops of the Petrograd garrison who had taken part in the July demonstrations were systematically dispersed. 100,000 of the 150,000 men in the garrison were to be sent to the various fronts.<sup>3</sup>

It was hardly surprising that Kornilov's and Kerensky's plans for the Petrograd garrison fully coincided. On August 22, Kornilov addressed a request to Kerensky to order the immediate dispatch of eight infantry regiments from Petrograd—on the grounds that they were indispensable for the building of defence lines in Estonia.<sup>4</sup> On August 24, four regiments were withdrawn from Petrograd on Ke-

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 24, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Rabochy* (The Worker), Petrograd, August 26, 1917; *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 25 and 26, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Bolshevikising of the Petrograd Garrison in 1917*, p. XX (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> N. Y. Ivanov, *The Kornilov Revolt and Its Defeat*, Leningrad, 1965, p. 103 (Russ. ed.).

rensky's orders. On the next day the Provisional Government asked the soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet for its approval, and for it to agree to the withdrawal of another three regiments still remaining in Petrograd. Many deputies and delegates of the regimental committees objected, pointing out the danger of such "withdrawals" to the cause of the revolution. But the conciliators suggested that it was not the job of the soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet "to start discussing Army orders".<sup>1</sup> Cossack cavalry regiments devoted to the Provisional Government were moved into the capital to replace the revolutionary soldiers. And at the same time more than 3,000 officers were transferred to Petrograd from General Headquarters and the front lines to supply leadership for the plotters during the coup.

Kerensky's flirtation with the organisers of the mutiny, and the active support which they received from the Cadets and foreign diplomats, encouraged the counter-revolutionaries to go ahead. On August 26 Kornilov presented his demands to Kerensky through the former ober-prosecutor of the Holy Sinod, Count Lvov: all power, both military and civil, was to be transferred to the Commander-in-Chief, and all ministers were to resign and hand over their duties to their deputies. The Government was supposed to be replaced by a "National Defence Council" with Kornilov as Chairman.<sup>2</sup>

Then on the night of the same day Kornilov issued a "Manifesto to the Russian People" in which he announced that he was taking over supreme power and called on the Army and the civilian population not to follow the Provisional Government's orders. At the same time the 3rd Cavalry Corps and other Kornilov troops began their advance on Petrograd.

Kornilov's revolt precipitated the next crisis in the second coalition Government. The Cadet Ministers Kokoshkin, Kartashev, Oldenburg and Yurenev, who were aware of what was happening at General Headquarters, resigned without delay in order to make it all the easier for the plotters to carry out their counter-revolutionary plans. Then the socialists followed with various excuses—Avksentyev, Zarduny, Skobelev and Chernov. For a brief period there was in fact no government at all in Russia.

The activities of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies at this time were not to

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 26, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in August 1917. The Crushing of the Kornilov Revolt*, p. 441 (Russ. ed.).

their credit. The people and their organisations (the Soviets, the factory committees, and the trade unions) should have been alerted and mobilised, but the leaders of "revolutionary democracy" assured the workers and soldiers that "there is no need for alarm", and even after Kornilov's men had begun their march on Petrograd they did no more than think of calling "A Special Meeting to Combat Kornilov", which was of course quite incapable of crushing the revolt.<sup>1</sup> All this provided Lenin with ample grounds for saying later that Tsereteli and the other conciliators had reduced the C.E.C. and the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet to the "role . . . of a wretched liberal assembly, which is bequeathing an archive of exemplarily impotent and pious wishes to the world".<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the night of August 27 and the whole of August 28 the C.E.C. and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies met in joint session. The resignation of the Cadets from the Provisional Government and Kornilov's revolt once again made the organisation of power the most pressing task of the day, but the Mensheviks (together with the Right-wing S.R.s) merely rushed, without any hesitation, to Kerensky's defence. The Menshevik faction moved a draft resolution which stated: "A blow is being aimed at Kerensky and the Provisional Government, and if they perish the cause of the revolution will perish."<sup>3</sup> This formula was accepted by the S.R.s too.

Kerensky took courage from the support of the Right-wing S.R. and Menshevik leadership of the central Soviet organs. He proposed setting up a "Directory" of five persons led by himself. This "way out" of the government crisis suited both the Cadets and the leaders of the conciliatory parties perfectly. Only the Bolshevik faction of the C.E.C. made a declaration of no confidence in the Provisional Government.

The capitulation of the S.R. and Menshevik majority of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and its support for the Kornilovite Kerensky produced a sharply negative response from the Petrograd proletariat. *Rabochy* wrote: "A storm of indignation has been aroused in the workers' districts by the news that the All-Russia C.E.C. has started another conciliatory flirtation with the bourgeoisie."<sup>4</sup>

The backstage bargaining between Kerensky and the leaders of the C.E.C. helped in no way to protect Petrograd and the other vital

<sup>1</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, p. 256 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> N. Y. Ivanov, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> *Rabochy*, special emergency issue, August 29, 1917.

centres of the country. For this it was necessary to rouse the great masses of the workers, soldiers, sailors to defend the gains of the revolution from Kornilov, and to rally around the proletariat a considerable section of petty-bourgeois democracy. Only the Bolshevik Party with its Leninist Central Committee and local organisations throughout the country was capable of carrying out this task.

On the initiative of the Bolshevik faction of the Petrograd Soviet E.C. an emergency meeting was called on the morning of August 27 of the soldiers' section and the military department of the Soviet, the bureau of the Army Organisation of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), the S.R.s' military organisation, representatives of district Soviets and factory committees and other bodies. They considered the question of establishing a centre from which to direct the fight against the counter-revolution. The minutes of this meeting have not been discovered and one can only get a picture of what took place at it from indirect information. The leaders of the Army Organisation of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) believed that the whole defence of Petrograd should be led by this body. Some Left-wing S.R.s were inclined to share this view<sup>1</sup> and its acceptance would have been quite logical since it accorded with the actual balance of class forces then existing in the capital and the true position of the various political parties. N. I. Podvoisky, one of the leaders of the Army Organisation of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), said later: "When the revolt [of Kornilov.—A.A.] flared up, the Mensheviks, despite the bragging of some of them, saw that they represented only themselves." There was still however a predominance of Right-wing elements in the executive organs of the central Soviets and they were able to have the Bolsheviks' proposals rejected.

At a session of the C.E.C. of the Soviets on the night of August 27-28 the Menshevik Vanshtein proposed setting up a People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution, to consist of three Bolsheviks, three S.R.s, three Mensheviks, five members of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies respectively, two members of the Petrograd Soviet and two of the Central Trade Union Council.<sup>2</sup> The delegates of the revolutionary sailors and soldiers who had arrived from Kronstadt, Helsingfors and Vyborg were later included on the committee while the concilia-

tors succeeded in getting one delegate from the Cossack sub-department of the C.E.C. and one from the military department of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies on to it. The People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution had about 30 members in all according to the information we possess, including seven or eight Bolsheviks. The S.R. Filippovsky was appointed chairman of the committee by the C.E.C. of the Soviets. The socialist parties were officially represented by Kamenev, Ryazanov and Nevsky (from the Bolsheviks), Lazimir, Sinani and Zavadje (from the S.R.s) and Lieber, Vanshtein and Martynov (from the Mensheviks).

The Bolsheviks were therefore in an absolute minority in this central coalition organ of struggle against the counter-revolution. Nevertheless, the Bolshevik Party had the most influence among the working people. The Menshevik N. Sukhanov has written that during the Kornilov revolt "the C.E.C., like the Provisional Government, was suspended in the air and possessed strength only in the united front with the Bolsheviks".<sup>1</sup> The same author has said in another place: "The masses were organised by the Bolsheviks and followed them; but for the Bolsheviks the People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution would have had nothing to do but issue appeals and sponsor idle speeches by speakers who had long since lost their prestige."<sup>2</sup>

The People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution, which was attached to the C.E.C. of the Soviets, provided a kind of pattern which was followed wherever emergency bodies of struggle were formed against Kornilov's supporters. According to an estimate of N. Y. Ivanov, such revolutionary centres appeared in 100 towns and cities.<sup>3</sup> In addition to city revolutionary committees, committees were set up to cover entire gubernias and regions: one for the Urals in Yekaterinburg, the revolutionary committee of Finland in Helsingfors, a West Siberian Committee in Omsk, gubernia committees in Moscow, Nizhni-Novgorod, Minsk and so on. Revolutionary committees were also formed in the districts of Petrograd and Moscow, at big factories, at key railway junctions, and in the Army and Navy.

The setting up of coalition committees to struggle against the generals and the Cadets during Kornilov's revolt was a practical realisation, the temporary alliance of the Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks and S.R.s. That is what Lenin had in mind when he said:

<sup>1</sup> N. Sukhanov, op. cit., Book VI, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Book V, pp. 291, 292.

<sup>3</sup> N. Y. Ivanov, op. cit., p. 184.

<sup>1</sup> V. Vladimirova has said this on the basis of her personal conversations with N. I. Podvoisky.

<sup>2</sup> N. Sukhanov, *Notes on the Russian Revolution*, Book V, Berlin-Petersburg-Moscow, 1923, p. 290 (Russ. ed.).

"Such an alliance has been tried on one front only, for five days only, from August 26 to August 31, the period of the Kornilov revolt," but, Lenin continued, speaking of the importance of a united front of all democratic forces in the struggle against the counter-revolution, "this alliance at that time scored a victory over the counter-revolution with an ease never yet achieved in any revolution."<sup>1</sup>

While the Bolsheviks acted in concert with the parties of petty-bourgeois democracy in the defence against Kornilov, they retained their complete ideological and political independence, continuing to expose the conciliatory positions of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s. A circular of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Central Committee sent to local Party organisations on August 31 stated that the Bolsheviks had joined the People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution so that they should be informed of what was happening, but were retaining their political independence.<sup>2</sup> The Central Committee explained further that the Bolsheviks' joining the coalition committees of struggle obviously did not imply that they agreed in the least with the Provisional Government, but that they would be in a position to put pressure on the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies to help secure the complete liquidation of the counter-revolution, the release of Bolsheviks and Internationalists arrested on July 3-5, the arming of the workers, the introduction of democracy into the Army and an end to repressions, etc.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Bolsheviks advocated an extensive programme of democratic reforms, which, if realised, could advance the revolution and bring nearer the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party based its tactics during the period of the Kornilov revolt on Lenin's advice. Back in July he had called the Party's attention, in his article "What Is the Class Origin of the Cavaignacs?", to the fact that the victory or defeat of any dictator would depend "solely on the staunchness, vigilance, and strength of Russia's revolutionary workers".<sup>4</sup> Following the State Conference, when the Mensheviks and the Right-wing S.R.s were calling for "the whole of democracy" to defend the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, July 5-November 5, 1917, pp. 48-49 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 96.

"revolutionary" Provisional Government from the encroachments of the Right (the Monarchists, Octobrists, Cadets and the rest), Lenin published another article, called "Rumours of a Conspiracy", which pointed out that Kerensky's government—the government that the conciliators wanted people to defend—was itself counter-revolutionary.<sup>1</sup>

At the very outset of the Kornilov revolt, Kerensky, who himself dreamed of having dictatorial powers, "suddenly" became unfaithful to Kornilov. The Prime Minister informed all military and civilian bodies that he had "discovered" a plot. He presented matters as follows: Kornilov and his accomplices "had encroached upon the gains of the revolution and the republican system", while Kerensky was allegedly taking "all steps necessary to safeguard freedom and order".<sup>2</sup>

The "resolute" steps of the Provisional Government, such as Kornilov's removal from the post of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and the appointment of Kerensky to take his place—and the replacement of Lukomsky, the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief by another of Kornilov's men, General Alexeyev—such "steps" were clearly designed only to deceive the revolutionary people.<sup>3</sup>

The Bolsheviks mercilessly exposed all these manipulations of Kerensky's clique, explaining to the workers, soldiers and peasants that the struggle between Kerensky and Kornilov was not a struggle either for freedom or against it but between two ways of liquidating the revolution. Kornilov and his conspirators, the revolution's worst enemies, would not stop at turning their guns on Petrograd, having already surrendered Riga to the Germans, in order to create the conditions for the restoration of the monarchy in Russia. An appeal issued by the Central and Petrograd Committees of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), the Party's Army Organisation, the central council of the factory committees, and the Bolshevik factions of the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet "To All Working People, to All the Workers and Soldiers of Petrograd" underlined that "the policy of seeking agreement with the bourgeoisie has weakened democracy, whetted the appetite of the bourgeoisie, and given it courage to rise openly against the revolution and against the people".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in August 1917. The Crushing of the Kornilov Revolt*, p. 445 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Vestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva*, Supplement No. 2, August 31, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Rabochy*, August 30, 1917.

In short, the bourgeoisie had unleashed a civil war by organising a counter-revolutionary mutiny. The political situation in the country became exceedingly complex. It was necessary to give a lead to the revolutionary people and to advance correct slogans concerning the need to push forward with the revolution—and it was Lenin's great genius that illuminated the path of the Russian working class to victory over the counter-revolution.

Lenin was in Helsingfors when he received news of the Kornilov revolt. He immediately sent a letter to the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) pointing out that Kornilov's revolt called for special tactics from the Party. The main thing, he said, was not to slide into the position of supporting the Provisional Government just for the sake of "defending" the gains of the revolution. He wrote: "We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, just as Kerensky's *troops* do, but we do not support Kerensky. On the contrary, we expose his weakness."<sup>1</sup> Anti-Kerensky propaganda was to be less direct, presenting "partial demands" to him designed to develop a truly revolutionary war against Kornilov.

The People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution was really only an executive arm of the C.E.C., and it was the Bolsheviks who in fact—mainly through their Army Organisation, the Interdistrict Conference of the Soviets and the district Soviets—actually put up the defence of Petrograd.

As soon as the capital learned that Kornilov had begun his advance the Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) held an emergency meeting chaired by S. V. Kosior. A report on the current situation was given on behalf of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) by A. S. Bubnov. The meeting then decided to set up a round-the-clock watch at the Petersburg Committee and at the district committees of the Party, to establish contacts with the district Soviets, regiments and factories, to arm the workers and to brief agitators on the prevailing situation. The Bolsheviks also mobilised the reserve troops still remaining in Petrograd for the fight against the rebels. On the night of August 27-28 representatives of nearly all Bolshevik cells in the Petrograd garrison met at the offices of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) under the chairmanship of Sverdlov. The soldiers decided to demand the arrest of all Kornilov's men and to give weapons to the workers. The Army Organisation of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) was given the task of working out, together with the soldiers' committees, a plan for the defence of the capital and

the suppression of the counter-revolutionary mutiny, and of taking measures for the protection of the main strongholds of the revolution in Petrograd.<sup>1</sup>

The Interdistrict Conference of Soviets acted with great energy. All Petrograd district Soviets received a telegraph message on August 28: "In view of the extreme gravity of the present situation following from the events at the Riga section of the front, the Interdistrict Conference is convening an emergency session. The districts' representatives are asked to come punctually at the fixed time. The agenda is: 1) the defence of Petrograd; 2) the struggle against the counter-revolution."

The Bolsheviks called an urgent meeting of the representatives of all district Soviets of Petrograd for the afternoon of August 28 which mapped out concrete steps for the defence of Petrograd. They were, in brief, as follows: 1) to send representatives of the Interdistrict Conference to the political centre formed by the C.E.C. of the Soviets (i.e., to include them on the People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution) as well as on all its technical commissions and sections; 2) to declare the Interdistrict Conference a permanent body acting in co-ordination with all other revolutionary centres (i.e., the revolutionary committees); 3) to set up a workers' militia immediately; 4) to establish district Soviet control over the actions of the commissars of the city police and for this purpose to assign representatives of the Soviets to the relevant departments; 5) to appoint members of the Soviets to the posts of commandants whenever possible; 6) to organise mobile detachments of people to arrest counter-revolutionary agitators; 7) to send all instructions to the district Soviets through the Interdistrict Conference; 8) to establish close contacts between the Soviets and the district Dumas in all districts; 9) to provide the district Soviets and the Interdistrict Conference with transport facilities from the C.E.C.<sup>2</sup>

The Interdistrict Conference was also able, as the political centre of all the district Soviets of Petrograd, to apply constant pressure on the People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution, to supervise the actual handing over of arms to the workers at factories, and to organise the building of defence lines around Petrograd, etc.

On August 28 the Peterhof District Soviet held an emergency meeting jointly with factory committees and representatives of the various socialist parties. This meeting decided to organise armed

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 286.

<sup>1</sup> *Soldat*, August 29, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in August 1917. The Crushing of the Kornilov Revolt*, pp. 483-84 (Russ. ed.).

workers' Red Guard detachments and to set up a special centre to take charge of the Red Guards, to be called The Revolutionary Committee Under the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Peterhof District. This revolutionary committee had 18 members.<sup>1</sup>

Public security committees were set up under some district Dumas (e.g., Spasskaya and Kazanskaya) parallel with the military-revolutionary committees. In such cases the Soviets followed the instructions of the Interdistrict Conference, while also taking initiatives of their own. The Executive Committee of the Soviet of the First Gorodskoy (City) District asked the Interdistrict Conference to inform it what tactics to adopt in relation to the "security committees" formed by the district Dumas.... "We do not consider it possible to send our representatives there [i.e., to the "security committees"].—A. A.] until all the district's armed forces have been handed over to the district Soviets and to their democratic organisations [the revolutionary committees.—A. A.]."<sup>2</sup>

In general the district Soviets of Petrograd began to function as organs of state power once again during the period of the Kornilov revolt. They removed the city's police chiefs in whom they had lost confidence and replaced them by members of the Soviets, appointed military commandants and organised the supply of food to the population and the troops.

Kornilov's plans for the capture of Petrograd included assaults on Kronstadt, Vyborg, Helsingfors and the fortified area around Revel. Under the smokescreen of "reinforcing the Northern Front", General Headquarters moved Cossack cavalry and shock troop battalions to these places.<sup>3</sup>

On August 28 the Kronstadt Soviet met in emergency session. The Soviet's E.C. had already taken certain preventive measures on the initiative of the Bolsheviks' military organisation: it had organised a round-the-clock watch on the direct telephone lines in the Navy Assembly Building, the Fortress Headquarters, Post Offices Nos. 1 and 2 and the Krasnaya Gorka (Red Hill) and Ino forts; it had cancelled all leave and sent delegates on duty to the Mine Laboratory and the

<sup>1</sup> "Minutes of the Peterhof District Soviet, August 28, 1917" (S.A.O.R.S.C., File 101); *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in August 1917. The Crushing of the Kornilov Revolt*, pp. 484-85 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Organisation and Setting up of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, p. 360 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> M. I. Kapustin, *The Soldiers of the Northern Front in the Struggle for Soviet Power*, Moscow, 1957, p. 139 (Russ. ed.).

Arsenal. The E.C. of the Soviet was in possession of marine transport and had cutters at the ready at the piers. The E.C. also sent telephone messages to all the soldiers' and sailors' committees in the fortified area instructing them unconditionally to obey only its orders.

The Kronstadt Soviet E.C. then set up a military-technical commission with broad powers to organise a rebuff to Kornilov's troops. The commission included members of the Kronstadt Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and of the E.C. of the Soviet S. S. Gridyushko, I. N. Kolbin, L. I. Smirnov-Svetlovsky, N. A. Pozharov, A. G. Pro-nin, I. P. Flerovsky and others. Representatives of the revolutionary committee were sent to Petrograd and Sestroretsk to deliver arms to Red Guard detachments. Contacts were maintained with the revolutionary committees of Peterhof, Oranienbaum, Helsingfors and Vyborg. Kronstadt also sent a 3,000-strong detachment of sailors, led by Bolshevik I. N. Kolbin, to help revolutionary Petrograd.<sup>1</sup>

By taking such decisive measures against the rebels, the Kronstadt Soviet was fighting for the further advance of the revolution and for the transfer of all power to the revolutionary classes. A delegation of sailors sent to Petrograd took with them the following Bolshevik message: "The Kronstadt Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, as a body which strives to stand guard over the revolution at all times, considers it its duty and its right at the present moment of acute danger to the revolution to send its representatives to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to work together with it on an equal footing." The Bolsheviks suggested printing this message and distributing it among the city's population "... so that the electors should know of the stand taken by the Kronstadt Soviet".

3,000 Kronstadt sailors landed at the pier on Vasilyevsky Island on August 29, from where the delegation went immediately to the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the Petrograd Soviet. But the welcome they received was far from unanimous. The workers' section of the Petrograd Soviet readily supported their fair demands, but the meeting of the sailors with the C.E.C. was described by them afterwards as "purely official". Tsereteli and Chernov stated that it was "impossible" for them to accept the demands of the Kronstadt Soviet for the release of comrades who had been arrested on July 3-5.

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Kronstadt Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 30, 1917.

This visit to Petrograd demonstrated to the sailors of the Baltic Fleet that it was the Bolshevik-led workers and soldiers and not the S.R. and Menshevik C.E.C. of the Soviets who were the real forces in the battle against the counter-revolution. Meanwhile the plenum of the Kronstadt Soviet had issued an appeal to the people of Kronstadt calling on them "to struggle energetically against the adventure of the counter-revolutionary generals, to guard the revolution, to keep calm and to help the forces of the workers and soldiers prepare to administer a rebuff to the counter-revolution".<sup>1</sup>

A revolutionary committee was set up in Helsingfors on August 28. It included representatives of the Helsingfors Soviet, Centrobalt, the regional committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Army Deputies of Finland, the regional Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, and the regimental and ships' committees—24 people in all. Prominent workers from Centrobalt included the Bolsheviks N. F. Izmailov, A. V. Baranov, P. P. Gordeyev and M. S. Tornin.<sup>2</sup> The revolutionary committee was given wide powers. The soldiers stationed in Finland and the crews of the ships anchored in Sveaborg's docks were requested to close their ranks in the struggle against the counter-revolution and not to obey the orders of their commanders without the prior approval of a revolutionary committee commissar. Commissioners were appointed to all headquarters and departments of the Army and the Baltic Fleet.<sup>3</sup> On the same day (August 28) a statement was sent to Kerensky: "The Baltic Fleet, which is guarding the interests of the revolution and the homeland, will not allow counter-revolutionary elements to take over the government of Russia."<sup>4</sup>

The Vyborg and Revel Soviets also took decisive steps. The Vyborg Soviet, together with the Corps committee, arrested General Oranovsky (commander of the 42nd Corps), Quarter-master-General Vasilyev, and General Stepanov, Commandant of the Fortress—all of whom were involved in the plot.<sup>5</sup> The following cable was then sent to the military department of the C.E.C.: "The 42nd Army

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in August 1917. The Crushing of the Kornilov Revolt*, pp. 632-33 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes and Directives of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet*, pp. 459, 462, 465, 476 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Baltic Sailors in Preparing for and Carrying Through the Great October Socialist Revolution*, pp. 188, 189 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Minutes and Directives of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet*, p. 152 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> *The Kornilov Period. The Bulletins of the Provisional Military Committee Under the C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Petrograd, 1917, p. 39 (Russ. ed.).

Corps and the Vyborg garrison are placed entirely at your disposal. At your first call we shall advance on the rebels led by General Kornilov."<sup>1</sup>

The action aimed at crushing the Kornilov counter-revolution in the Revel fortified area was carried out under the leadership of the North Baltic Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and local Bolshevik organisations through the Revel Soviet of Workers' and Army Deputies, the E.C. of the Soviets of Estonia and the sailors' and Army committees.

The military section of the Revel Soviet was authorised to determine the mood of the local garrison and to plan possible military support for Petrograd. The Soviets of Narva, Pyarnu and other towns were asked to keep a close watch on telegraph and telephone communications, to arrest counter-revolutionaries, to guard railway stations, to close down bourgeois newspapers, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Revel sailors arrested General Dolgoruky, commander of the 1st Cavalry Corps, en route to Finland to carry out Kornilov's orders. A joint meeting of the Revel Soviet and the Fleet and Army committees held on August 28 declared the full readiness of the Navy, the Revel garrison and the troops of the fortified area to fight against the Kornilov revolt.

The Soviets of the Bologoye Junction, Pskov, Novgorod, Narva, Gatchina, Luga, Yamburg (Kingisepp) and other towns close to Petrograd all took part in liquidating the Kornilov revolt. An emergency executive committee was set up at Bologoye station which included representatives of the local Soviet of Deputies. The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Luga was especially active. Units of the 1st Don Cavalry Division began arriving at Luga station on the evening of August 27. 14 trainloads of Cossacks were concentrated at Luga in 24 hours. They had planned to break through to Petrograd from here but encountered the stubborn resistance of the railway workers and the local garrison. On the instructions of the Luga Soviet the rails leading to Petrograd were removed and all lines at the station filled with empty trucks.<sup>3</sup> Kerensky, having planned to make use of General Krasnov's 3rd Cavalry Corps to crush any revolutionary action in Petrograd, had given orders for

<sup>1</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in August 1917. The Crushing of the Kornilov Revolt*, p. 494 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Estonia*, p. 211 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, August 29, 1917; Y. Martynov, *Kornilov (the Attempted Coup d'Etat)*, Moscow, 1927, p. 135 (Russ. ed.).

the Cossack trains to be allowed to go through Luga to Narva. The Luga Soviet ignored this provocative order and sent agitators to join workers from Petrograd in carrying out explanatory work among the Cossacks and distributing newspapers and leaflets. The Cossacks were advised to elect delegates to take part in the meetings of the Luga Soviet and later to send them to Petrograd where they would be able to see what was going on for themselves and be convinced of Kornilov's treachery.<sup>1</sup>

The workers' section of the Narva Soviet, and soldiers representing the local garrison and the Cossacks who had come to Narva, held a joint meeting on August 30. The delegates of the 1st Nerchinsk Cossack Regiment declared their solidarity with the Narva Soviet. Members of the Soviet reported on the talks they had had with Cossacks detained at Yamburg, Sala and Komarovka stations. It turned out that they had been misled by their commanders and thought they were being transported to the Northern Front. When they learned what the true situation was, some units announced their readiness to support the Soviets.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of August 29 and August 30 news came in to the People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution, the C.E.C. and to the Petrograd, Moscow and other Soviets of the successful liquidation of the revolt. The Gatchina Soviet reported that Kornilov's troops had begun to waver. His artillery declared: "We won't shoot at our own people." Only the "wild" Caucasus Cossack Division remained loyal to Kornilov. But even its loyalty turned out to be short-lived. A large group of agitators—members of the Petrograd City and district Soviets, Putilov workers, natives of the Caucasus and sailors of the 2nd Baltic Depot led by Centrobalt member F. K. Kuzmin—was sent to meet the Caucasus Cavalry Division. They explained to them what Kornilov was doing and what the real position of the Bolsheviks was, calling on the Cossacks not to obey their commanders' orders.<sup>3</sup>

Many military units at the Northern Front and its rear areas, including entire armies (the 12th Army and others) prepared to defend revolutionary Petrograd. Under Bolshevik pressure the conciliatory Pskov Soviet took steps to isolate the General Headquarters

of the Northern Front. Troops advancing under the command of the Novgorod Soviet stopped Kornilov's trains at Utorgosh and Shimsk railway stations, which they took.<sup>1</sup> On August 30 the E.C. of the soldiers' committees of the Northern Front reported to the Pskov Soviet: "News of the triumphant revolution is arriving from all parts of the area. The Soviets have mastered the situation everywhere."<sup>2</sup>

The resolute actions of the Soviets of Minsk, Vitebsk, Gomel, Mogilev, Orsha, Smolensk and other towns and rear areas of the Western Front also played a big part in crushing the Kornilov revolt. A joint meeting of E.C. members of the Western Front and of the Minsk Soviet was called on the night of August 27-28. A military-revolutionary committee was set up in Minsk and M. V. Frunze was appointed head of the revolutionary troops of the Minsk area. Despite the resistance of the Western Front Commissar V. A. Zhdanov (an S.R.), the revolutionary committee passed a decision to address the troops and the civilian population on the Kornilov revolt, establish contacts with the Soviets in the rear and with the railwaymen's union, send representatives of the front committee to Petrograd, Moscow and the various Army units, take over control of the city's telegraph and railway communications, and to see to it that no military unit going out of the Minsk area did so without the prior permission of the E.C. Delegates were entrusted to find out which regiments could, if necessary, be sent to Petrograd and Moscow to help fight the counter-revolution.<sup>3</sup> The revolutionary committee also sent representatives to Orsha, Zhlobin and Bobruisk, organised patrols in Minsk and its suburbs, took over supervision of print shops, checked the spread of rebels' leaflets and placed counter-revolutionaries under arrest.

The bureau of the Minsk Soviet E.C. reported to the C.E.C. on August 29 that the local garrison was completely on the side of the Soviet and that a split had appeared in the Cossacks between the men and their officers.<sup>4</sup>

The Soviet in Gomel acted as a military revolutionary headquarters. It dissolved the bourgeois Committee of Revolutionary Se-

<sup>1</sup> Report of M. Bulychev, a member of the C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, in the book *Counter-revolution in 1917 (The Kornilov Revolt)*, Moscow, 1924, p. 219 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Establishing Soviet Power in the Pskov Gubernia*, p. 100 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Byelorussia*, Collection of Documents, Vol. I, Minsk, 1957, pp. 604, 605, 608, 611, 614 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in August 1917. The Crushing of the Kornilov Revolt*, p. 570 (Russ. ed.).

curity and replaced it by an emergency Committee of Five with Bolsheviks leading it. This revolutionary committee took steps to guard the post and telegraph offices and the railway junction. Armed groups of workers and soldiers patrolled the highways and the roads to prevent troops from being moved in from the South-Western Front. The Gomel Soviet also sent a 300-strong revolutionary force and an artillery battery to Mogilev to help soldiers who had engaged Kornilov's troops.<sup>1</sup>

The Vitebsk Soviet kept revolutionary order in the city, assigned a commissar to the headquarters of the military district and delegated people to watch the railway station and the post and telegraph offices. On the Soviet's instructions an artillery train sent by Kornilov was arrested on its way to Mogilev.<sup>2</sup> The following cable was sent from Vitebsk to the People's Committee for Combating Counter-revolution: "The revolutionary troops are in high spirits.... All have rallied around the Soviets...."<sup>3</sup>

The Mogilev Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies found itself in an especially difficult position during the revolt, as the town was the seat of the Supreme Commander's General Headquarters. Kornilov declared a state of emergency in Mogilev, gave orders for the Soviet to be dissolved, banned all meetings and enforced military censorship. The E.C. of the Soviet went underground but carried on with its work from there, keeping in touch with the front committees at the Western and South-Western fronts and with the military revolutionary committees at Minsk, Gomel and Vitebsk, all of which joined forces in the struggle against the counter-revolution. C.E.C. leaflets were printed at the Mogilev Zemstvo printing shop and agitators carried out explanatory work among the garrison troops.

A battalion of shock troops was detained in Mogilev. After a visit to the Mogilev Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the soldiers at the battalion declared that they would only carry out Kornilov's orders provided the C.E.C. of the Soviets instructed them to do so. On August 31, the Western Front committee reported to Petrograd that Kornilov's General Headquarters had been completely isolated from the whole of Russia.<sup>4</sup> On the next day Generals

<sup>1</sup> *The Working People of the Gomel Area in the Struggle for Soviet Power (1917-1920). A Record of Events*, Gomel, 1958, p. 38 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Gолос Солдата* (Soldier's Voice), Petrograd, August 30, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Kornilov Period*, pp. 24-25 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *From the History of the Setting up of Soviet Power in Byelorussia and the Formation of the B.S.S.R.*, Vol. IV, p. 613; *The Kornilov Period*, p. 93 (Russ. ed.).

Kornilov, Lukomsky, Romanovsky and others were arrested in Mogilev. Somewhat earlier, General Novosiltsev, chairman of the chief committee of the Officers' Union and some 40 other officers had been arrested on their way to the South to General Kaledin's forces.

Kornilov's hopes of getting support for his adventure from the troops of the South-Western Front were also frustrated. The Executive Committee of the Front reported to the C.E.C. on August 28 that the counter-revolutionary actions of Denikin, Markov, Elsner and others had been crushed. By that time the counter-revolution in the South led by the Cossack ataman Kaledin had been almost completely suppressed, the Soviets of Deputies of Rostov-on-Don, Novocherkassk, Tsaritsyn, Saratov and a number of other towns in the Volga Area playing a big part in this.

Between August 28 and 31 more than 250 gubernia, uyezd, city and other Soviets and soldiers' and sailors' committees expressed their readiness to act in defence of the revolution. On August 30, the C.E.C. cabled all Soviets that the Kornilov revolt could be regarded as entirely liquidated. There were two main reasons for this success: "First, the whole of the Army at the front took the side of the revolution and the soldiers' committees kept revolutionary order.... And secondly, the local Soviets promptly mobilised all the forces of democracy to prevent the spread of the revolt."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the C.E.C. and of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies were consistent in their refusal to recognise the decisive part that the Bolshevik-led masses played in defeating the revolt. But the inspirers of the counter-revolution themselves were compelled to admit the strength of the Soviets and the revolutionary committees. The Cadet paper *Rech*, for instance, noted that the tremendous growth of the Bolshevik influence in the capital was "indisputable".<sup>2</sup>

The defeat of Kornilov's attempted putsch demonstrated the vast superiority of the revolutionary forces over those of the counter-revolution. Lenin wrote that the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie's action revealed no strength, no support from the masses, no chance of victory.<sup>3</sup>

Kornilov's defeat helped the workers and revolutionary soldiers to overcome some of their illusions about the advantages of concilia-

<sup>1</sup> V. Vladimirova, op. cit., p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> P. N. Milyukov, "The Liquidation of the Kornilov Revolt" in the collection *The Kornilov Revolt* (White Memoirs), p. 244; *Rech*, August 31, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 35.

tion with the bourgeoisie, widening further the gap between the working people and the Mensheviks and S.R.s; moreover it showed in bold relief the necessity of uniting all revolutionary forces under the banner of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin stressed in this connection that "the Kornilov revolt and the subsequent events served as practical lessons and made possible the October victory".<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES DURING THE PERIOD OF THE GENERAL NATIONAL CRISIS AND THE VICTORY OF THE OCTOBER ARMED UPRISING



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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 88.

1. THE WINNING OF THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS'  
DEPUTIES IN PETROGRAD, MOSCOW AND OTHER TOWNS  
BY THE BOLSHEVIKS

The difficulty of the struggle which the workers, soldiers and poorest peasants of Russia had to wage against the counter-revolution of the bourgeoisie and the landowners during July and August 1917 put the Soviets and the soldiers' and sailors' committees through a very severe trial. In his summing up of this stage of the advance of the revolution Lenin wrote:

"The 'fresh breeze' of the Kornilov affair, however, which promised a real storm, was enough for all that was musty in the Soviet to blow away for a while, and for the initiative of the revolutionary people to begin expressing itself as something majestic, powerful and invincible."<sup>1</sup>

Radical changes occurred first of all in the Soviets of Petrograd and Moscow. On August 31 the Petrograd Soviet met to discuss a report of the Menshevik Bogdanov on the current situation. After hearing it, the Soviet adopted, by 279 votes to 115, with 50 abstentions, a Bolshevik resolution "On Power" which the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) had passed the day before (i.e., despite the opposition of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s).<sup>2</sup> This resolution stated that the way out of the critical situation that the nation found itself in as a result of the Provisional Government's irresponsibility and its unlimited power was for a new administration to be formed consisting of representatives of the revolutionary workers and the poorest peasants—which could, without looking over its shoulder at the bourgeoisie, to take steps in the interests of the working masses.

The Bolsheviks proposed that the following measures should be taken as a matter of urgency by such a revolutionary government: it

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, pp. 369-70.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Central Committee, pp. 37-38; *Rabochy*, emergency issue, September 1, 1917 (Russ. ed.).

should put an end to the repressions against the working class and its organisations; abolish capital punishment; restore full freedom of agitation and revive the democratic organisations in the Army and rid it of its counter-revolutionary command; introduce the election of commissars and other officials by local bodies; implement the right of nations to self-determination; dissolve the State Duma and the State Council; immediately convene the Constituent Assembly; and do away with all privileges based on class and property, so ensuring the complete equality of all citizens.<sup>1</sup>

For the first time since it had come into existence the Petrograd Soviet categorically condemned the policy of conciliation with the bourgeoisie and announced its intention, once and for all, to take the road of revolutionary struggle in the interests of the working people. This was an enormous victory for the Bolsheviks. The change of policy of the Petrograd Soviet considerably raised its authority in the eyes of the workers and revolutionary soldiers of Petrograd. The 2,700 workers of the Army's horseshoe factory told their deputy to inform the Petrograd Soviet that they heartily welcomed the turn it had taken. The workers and office employees of the Sestroretsk munitions factory also unanimously approved the resolution "On Power", declaring their readiness "to struggle with all their might to have this resolution put into practice".<sup>2</sup>

Workers and soldiers in many cases gave expression to their support for the new line of the Petrograd Soviet by electing Bolsheviks to it. The workers of the Admiralty's shipbuilding yard elected the Bolshevik list of deputies to the Petrograd City Soviet at elections held on September 27, 1917 voting for it. They also elected the Bolshevik list to the Kolomenskoye District Soviet of Workers' Deputies by 1275 votes (the S.R.s winning only 476 votes). The yard sent two Bolsheviks to the City Soviet and four Bolsheviks and one S.R. to the District Soviet.<sup>3</sup> A general meeting of sailors and employees at the Navy School instructed their newly elected deputy to join the Bolshevik faction and told him they would recall and replace him if he did not do so.<sup>4</sup>

The Petrograd Soviet's revolutionary stand on the question of power was supported by all district Soviets except the Admiralty

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Central Committee, pp. 37-38.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 1000; *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in September 1917. The General National Crisis. Documents and Materials*, Moscow, 1961, p. 278 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The October Armed Uprising in Petrograd*, Collection of Documents and Materials, Moscow, 1957, p. 102 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

District Soviet, where the conciliators remained predominant until the end of 1917. The Interdistrict Conference of Soviets authorised D. Z. Manuilsky to make a statement to the next plenum of the Petrograd Soviet notifying it of the Conference's full support for its decision of August 31 and to demand the immediate election of a new E.C. for the Petrograd Soviet to replace the existing S.R. and Menshevik one and the inclusion of the Conference's representatives on it.<sup>1</sup>

The workers of Moscow were also waging a steady and persistent struggle for a change in the policy of their City Soviet. As in Petrograd it was the district Soviets that gave the lead. They demanded that the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies give up its conciliatory policy, support the Bolsheviks and come out in uncompromising defence of the gains of the revolution—or else resign. The writer G. Aronshtam (Grishin) has conveyed the atmosphere that prevailed in the districts of Moscow after the defeat of the Kornilov revolt: "In September 1917 voices were to be heard at meetings of the Railway Junction Soviet demanding that the district Soviets call a joint session to dissolve the conciliatory Moscow Soviet and to replace it by a collective body of the district Soviets."<sup>2</sup>

There are other documents which show that Moscow's workers, in their search for the means to correct the political line of the Moscow Soviet E.C., tried to make use of the experience of the Petrograd working class. The Soviet of the Gorodskoy District of Moscow passed a resolution on September 1 on the possible composition of an Interdistrict Soviet body.<sup>3</sup> This was followed by a meeting of the E.C.s of all district Soviets which also debated the question of forming a Moscow Interdistrict Conference. However, the changes that occurred in the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies shortly afterwards indicated that it was no longer necessary to create such a separate body.

The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies held a joint meeting on September 5 at which a sharp clash between the parties took place on the question of the formation of a government. The S.R.s demanded a coalition government made up of representatives of the Soviets, the urban and Zemstvo self-governing bodies, the co-operatives and other public bodies. The Mensheviks claimed that any new government should

<sup>1</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in 1917*, p. 515 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Railwaymen and the Revolution*, Collected Memoirs, Moscow, 1923, pp. 53-54 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, September 1, 1917.

be based primarily on the organs of urban self-government (the Dumas, Zemstvo boards, etc.) which, so they believed, "represented all the strata of revolutionary democracy", and that intermediate, i.e., propertied, elements also should not be "overlooked". The Bolsheviks defended the August 31 resolution "On Power" adopted by the Petrograd Soviet. After a prolonged debate, the Moscow Soviets carried the Bolsheviks' resolution by 355 votes to 254. This contained demands for a complete break with the policy of conciliation, for the arming of the workers and the formation of Red Guards.<sup>1</sup>

The winning over of the Petrograd and Moscow City Soviets by the Bolsheviks was of political importance. *Rabochy Put* wrote: "The proletariat and the garrison of the two capitals, the two largest industrial centres, provide us with graphic proof of the defeat of the policy of conciliation and the break with tactics of the dominant S.R. and Menshevik parties. The votes in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets are real evidence of a new wave in the revolution."<sup>2</sup>

During the first half of September the decisions of the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets received the support of more than 80 Soviets. The Soviets of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Tver, Kostroma, Vyborg, Helsingfors, Kronstadt, Revel, Minsk, Kiev, Kazan, Saratov, Samara, Tsaritsyn, Yekaterinburg, Tashkent and other places all spoke out in favour of the transfer of all power into the hands of the workers and the poorest sections of the peasantry.

Numerous reports from the localities addressed to regional, gubernia, and other Party and Soviet organs, as well as the materials of congresses and conferences of Soviets, prove that the influence of the Bolsheviks grew considerably in the Soviets of the Central Industrial Area during the Kornilov revolt. The instructor of the Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) M. P. Yanyshев visited the towns and workers' settlements of the Vladimir Gubernia (Alexandrov, Strunino, Karabanovo, Kolchugino, etc.). He reported that he observed "a universal turning away of the workers from the Mensheviks and S.R.s", an increase in the number of the Bolshevik organisations and greater unity among the international elements in the Soviets.<sup>3</sup> A gubernia Party conference held September 17-18 in Ivanovo-Voznesensk heard from delegates that nearly all the Soviets in Vladimir

Gubernia gave their support to the Bolsheviks and that Red Guard detachments were being formed everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

Instructor Y. Alperovich, on returning from Smolensk Gubernia, wrote: "There has been a general change in the feelings of the masses. . . The workers and the soldiers have one hope . . . the Bolsheviks."<sup>2</sup> The Bolsheviks won over to their side during September many of the Soviets of the Moscow Gubernia, the Rzhev and Novy Torzok Soviets (Tver Gubernia), secured a majority in the Bryansk, Bezhitsa (Orel Gubernia) and other local Soviets.

The Bolshevizing of the Soviets in Nizhni-Novgorod, Tula and Yaroslavl was slower because the population there was mainly petty-bourgeois and the S.R.s had a strong influence among the workers, many of whom had not yet fully severed their ties with agriculture. The Nizhni-Novgorod Soviet of Workers' Deputies had 48 Bolsheviks, 60 S.R.s and 55 Mensheviks in September, its executive committee consisting of three Bolsheviks, five S.R.s and three Mensheviks. While the Soviets in Petrograd and Moscow were passing the Bolshevik resolution "On Power", the conciliators in the Nizhni-Novgorod Soviet carried a resolution supporting the coalition Government (without the Cadets).<sup>3</sup>

The Mensheviks and the S.R.s also succeeded in retaining their majority in the Tula Soviet for a long time. After Kornilov's revolt had been crushed and the workers and soldiers began to demand a change in the Soviets' policy with greater insistence, the conciliators tried the manoeuvre of announcing that there was to be an early reorganisation of the Soviet and appointed a commission to carry it out—but they never convened the commission. The Tula Bolshevik newspaper *Proletarskaya Pravda* wrote, exposing the intrigues of the S.R. and Menshevik E.C.: "The Soviet continues to be a defencist one, a conciliatory one. It has long since lost all connection with the masses that elected it. There is only one way out of this situation: fresh elections must be held throughout the area without delay. This is the only method of creating a revolutionary Soviet."<sup>4</sup> The vanguard of Tula's working class supported the calls of the Bolsheviks. The workers of the munitions and other factories protested against the illegal actions of the Mensheviks and S.R.s and recalled and

<sup>1</sup> *The Struggle for the October Revolution in Vladimir Gubernia*, pp. 88-91, 94, 95 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> Report notes of the instructors of the Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) (C.P.A. I.M.L., File 60).

<sup>3</sup> *The Establishing of Soviet Power Throughout the Country*, Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1953, p. 142 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Proletarskaya Pravda*, Tula, October 11, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, September 7, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 9, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in September 1917. The General National Crisis*, p. 29 (Russ. ed.).

replaced their deputies. The combined efforts of the Bolshevik-led workers broke the resistance of the S.R. and Menshevik bloc and the Tula Soviet agreed to hold a new general election of deputies before October 25.

The soldiers' section of the Yaroslavl Soviet had been almost entirely under Bolshevik influence since July, but the Mensheviks and S.R.s dominated the workers' section. By taking advantage of this fact the conciliators had sabotaged the harmony of the Soviet's work and pushed through their own decisions at the meetings of the workers' section. However, the Kornilov revolt caused some changes in the feelings of the Yaroslavl workers and they soon began to campaign for new elections. These were completed by early October and resulted in a big increase in the number of Bolshevik deputies to 75 in the soldiers' section (alongside 15 S.R.s) and 30 in the workers' section (alongside 16 S.R.s and 34 Mensheviks).<sup>1</sup>

Noticeable changes also occurred in the party composition of the Soviets in the agrarian gubernias of Central Russia. Up to the time of the defeat of the Kornilov revolt the Ryazan, Tambov, Kursk and Orel gubernias had been "S.R. country". Bolshevik organisations were few and far between and had almost no contact with the regional Party and Soviet centres. The plenum of the Moscow Regional Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) held in August 1917 called special attention to the need to improve organisational and political work in these gubernias; instructors, lecturers and propagandists were sent from Moscow and a beginning made on forming more local Bolshevik organisations. This promoted the growth of the political awareness of the working people and by September the Bryansk, Belgorod, Ryazan, Kozlov and other Soviets had come out in support of the Bolshevik positions adopted by the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets.<sup>2</sup>

The fight against the Kornilov-Kaledin counter-revolution led to a great upsurge in the activities of the Soviets of the Volga Area and the South, and the Bolsheviks again became the leading force in many of them. The Saratov City Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) reported on September 4: "We have formed the majority in the Soviet, though not a large majority as yet, and our resolution on the present situation has been passed. The elections to the Soviet now in progress will obviously improve the balance further in our fa-

vour...."<sup>3</sup> By September 21 there were 320 Bolsheviks in the Saratov Soviet, 103 S.R.s, 76 Mensheviks and 34 non-party deputies.<sup>4</sup> This represented a fourfold increase in the size of the Bolshevik faction and a two-thirds cut in those of the S.R.s and the Mensheviks as compared to the results of the June-August elections.<sup>5</sup>

A joint meeting of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies and of representatives of the regimental committees and factories of Samara approved the Bolshevik resolution "On Power" by a majority of 118 to 47 with three abstentions. The S.R. and Menshevik presidium of the soldiers' section of the Samara Soviet then resigned, and two Bolsheviks, two S.R.s and two Mensheviks were elected to form a new presidium.<sup>6</sup>

The Soviet of Syzran carried a Bolshevik resolution on September 3 demanding "the formation of a government consisting of representatives of workers', soldiers' and peasants' organisations which would immediately propose peace to the belligerent nations and initiate revolutionary transformations". In spite of the protests of some of the Mensheviks and S.R.s most members of the Syzran Soviet spoke for the rapid convening of an All-Russia Congress of Soviets.<sup>7</sup> And a month later the Syzran Bolshevik Committee reported to the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.): "Everything has changed in Syzran. The Soviet is entirely ours. . . . The garrison is on our side."<sup>8</sup> By October, 235 out of the 250 deputies in the Syzran Soviet were Bolsheviks.<sup>9</sup>

There were again striking changes in Astrakhan in the autumn of 1917. The soldiers' section of the Astrakhan Soviet was completely "defencist" up to October. After new elections, 80 per cent of its deputies were Bolsheviks and Left S.R.s; over 50 per cent of the seats in the workers' section went to the Bolsheviks.<sup>10</sup>

Following the July crisis the Soviets in the Don Troops Area almost ceased to function. Kaledin's men rode about the towns and Cossack villages raiding the Soviets, the land committees and other

<sup>1</sup> *The Correspondence of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Secretariat with Local Party Organisations (March 1917-October 1917)*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1957, p. 184 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Anniversary of the Socialist Revolution in Saratov*, Collection of Articles, Saratov, 1918, p. 1 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 27, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. A Record of Events*, Vol. III, p. 453 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>6</sup> *The Correspondence of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Secretariat...*, Vol. I, p. 326 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>7</sup> *Privolzhskaya Pravda*, Samara, October 26, 1917.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Voprosy istorii KPSS* (Problems of the History of the C.P.S.U.) No. 2, 1951, pp. 30-32; *The Struggle to Establish and Strengthen Soviet Power in Ryazan Gubernia (1917-1920)*, Collection of Documents, Ryazan, 1957, pp. 89-90 (Russ. eds.).

democratic bodies.<sup>1</sup> Under these difficult conditions the Bolsheviks of Rostov, Taganrog, Novocherkassk and other places continued the struggle to win over the masses to their side. By early September there was a 25 or 30-strong Bolshevik faction in the Rostov Soviet of Workers' Deputies, and seven Bolshevik representatives on the Soviet's E.C.<sup>2</sup> The Sevastopol Soviet held new elections on October 10-14 and the Bolsheviks received 58 seats in the new Soviet, an increase of nearly five times over their previous 12 seats, although the conciliators remained in the majority.<sup>3</sup>

The Bolshevik organisations were also successful in winning over the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Urals. The Bolshevik A. V. Vorobyov, an active participant in the struggle for Soviet power in Yekaterinburg, recalls: "By September the great majority of the Soviets in the Urals were already Bolshevik; and those Soviets that were not yet entirely Bolshevik-dominated nevertheless passed our resolutions in most cases."<sup>4</sup> Elections to the Soviets took place in almost all the towns and miners' villages of the Urals in the autumn of 1917. The Nizhni-Tagil Soviet decided on September 22 to elect a new E.C., and to vote by secret ballot "in order to determine how the workers really felt".<sup>5</sup> "All power to the Soviets!", "End the war at once" and "Distribute the landowners' estates" were the slogans of elections held in Orenburg, in which 90 per cent of the deputies elected were Bolshevik-minded soldiers.<sup>6</sup> The Bolsheviks strengthened their positions in the Ufa, Zlatoust, Kasli, and many other Soviets. According to existing data, 69 out of the 100 Soviets in the Urals had been won by the Bolsheviks before the October Revolution.<sup>7</sup>

It was especially important for the further advance of the revolution for the Bolsheviks to win over the Yekaterinburg Soviet, strongly influenced by the Mensheviks and S.R.s. They therefore worked hard to persuade the workers and soldiers of the Yekaterinburg factories and garrison of the necessity of holding fresh elections, and

<sup>1</sup> A. M. Kaledin—a tsarist general who led a counter-revolutionary mutiny in the Don Area in late 1917-early 1918. He shot himself after Soviet troops had crushed the revolt.

<sup>2</sup> *The Struggle for Soviet Power on the Don, 1917-1920*, Collection of Documents, Rostov-on-Don, 1957, pp. 83-84 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Collection of Documents, Moscow, 1957 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> A. V. Vorobyov's Memoirs, C.P.A. I.M.L., File 70.

<sup>5</sup> *Uralsky Rabochy* (The Urals Worker), October 18, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 70.

<sup>7</sup> *The Struggle for the Victory of the October Socialist Revolution in the Urals*, p. 303 (Russ. ed.).

under the pressure of the masses the Yekaterinburg Soviet was compelled to consent to a fresh general election of deputies "from all the workers and troops". The Yekaterinburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) worked out and distributed a special Mandate to the Deputies. "The Mandate was approved unanimously almost everywhere. In many places even the S.R.s voted in favour."<sup>1</sup> The result was that the Bolsheviks got two-thirds of the seats in the Yekaterinburg Soviet.<sup>2</sup>

After the Kornilov revolt great changes occurred in the Ukrainian Soviets. The Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies discussed the Government crisis on September 8. The Bolshevik speakers A. Ivanov, N. Lebedev and others pointed out that the whole of the bourgeoisie was counter-revolutionary and exposed the Mensheviks' attempts to find "clean" bourgeois to be included in a new coalition government. For the first time, the Kiev Soviet passed a Bolshevik resolution on the current situation by 119 votes to 66. The conciliators then announced their resignation from the Executive Committee, which the meeting accepted. It was then decided to elect an entirely new E.C. before October 1.<sup>3</sup> Events thus took a bad turn for the Right-wing groups of the petty-bourgeois parties—the S.R.s, the Mensheviks, the Bundists and the Ukrainian Social-Democrats—and they all began agitating for the reversal of this decision. Another meeting of the Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies was called for September 24. But after a detailed report followed by a lively debate the Soviet confirmed its previous decision to elect another E.C. by 81 votes to 48.<sup>4</sup>

The change of line by the Kiev Soviet was of the greatest importance for extending the revolution in the Ukraine. *Rabochy Put*, discussing this, wrote: "We greet the Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies on this new revolutionary road. We call on the workers of Kiev to rally around their elected bodies, especially the Soviet of Workers' Deputies."<sup>5</sup>

The Bolshevising of the Soviets in the Ukraine proceeded at a noticeably more rapid rate in September and October. The Bolsheviks

<sup>1</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays on the History of the Bolshevik Organisations in the Urals*, Part I, Sverdlovsk, 1951, p. 285 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> Y. Y. Zyk, "The Crushing of the Kornilov Revolt and the Bolshevising of the Soviets in the Ukraine" in *Transactions of the Donetsk Industrial Institute*, Vol. 48, Issue 3, Stalino, 1959, pp. 38-39.

<sup>4</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in September 1917. The General National Crisis*, pp. 203-04 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> *Rabochy Put*, October 3, 1917.

viks of the Kharkov Soviet tirelessly explained to the deputies the impossibility of attaining final victory over the Kornilov-Kaledin counter-revolution until full power had been given to the workers and the poorest peasants. F. A. Sergeyev (Artem) wrote in a letter to the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.): "Because of Kornilov's action the formation of Bolshevik sentiments is proceeding like wildfire."<sup>1</sup>

Soviets in many places passed resolutions in late August and September demanding the setting up of "a homogeneous socialist government", but rank-and-file voters meant something different by this formula than the S.R. and Menshevik leaders—they wanted Soviet power, i.e., a government of workers and peasants responsible to the Soviets. On September 29 an extended meeting of the Yekaterinoslav Soviet, after hearing a speech by G. I. Petrovsky, carried a Bolshevik motion calling for the transfer of state power to the Soviets. The Mensheviks and the S.R.s then insisted on a second, roll-call vote. This was taken and brought even more votes for the Bolsheviks.<sup>2</sup>

Most workers and soldiers in Lugansk already supported the Bolsheviks before the Kornilov revolt, and they won 95 per cent of the seats in new elections to the City Soviet held on September 18. K. Y. Voroshilov was elected chairman of the Soviet. The Bolsheviks received 42 of the 50 seats in the Gorlovka Soviet and 42 per cent of the votes in Mariupol.<sup>3</sup>

The Soviets were also Bolshevised at a rapid rate in Byelorussia and the Baltic Area. The Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies held elections in September in which the Bolsheviks were active. Since the Minsk Soviet enjoyed authority not only among the urban population but also among many of the Army units on the Western Front, it was especially important that the Bolsheviks win it. The day before the elections were held, the newspaper *Molot* published A Message to the Deputies written by A. F. Myasnikov. This contained an appeal to the electorate to break once and for all with the conciliators. "The task of the day is to form a government which, having emerged from the womb of the Soviets, will be responsible to the Soviets"—i.e., a dictatorship of the proletariat and of the poorest sections of the peasantry.<sup>4</sup> 337 deputies were elected to the Minsk Soviet—184 Bolsheviks, 62 S.R.s and

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Secretariat..., Vol. I, p. 203 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> A. L. Fraiman, "The Struggle against Kornilov's Counter-revolutionary Mutiny in the Ukraine", in *Historical Notes*, Vol. 61, p. 146 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. Y. Borshchevsky, *The Working Class and the Soviets of the Donets-Krivoi Rog Basin in the October Revolution*, pp. 203-04 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Molot* (The Hammer), Minsk, September 17, 1917.

25 Mensheviks among them. The Bolsheviks obtained two-thirds of the seats on the E.C. of the Soviet, and all the seats on its presidium.<sup>1</sup> The Soviets of Vitebsk, Gomel and other towns came out against the coalition with the bourgeoisie. The Orsha Bolshevik organisation reported to the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.): "The Soviet

TABLE 3\*  
The Party Composition of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers'  
Deputies in September-October 1917

| The Soviets   | Total<br>number<br>of<br>members | Bolshe-<br>viks | Menshe-<br>viks | S.R.s | Other<br>parties | Non-party | Per<br>cent<br>Bolshe-<br>viks | Note                                     |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|--|
| Saratov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .   | 533                              | 320             | 76              | 103   | —                | 34        | 60.0                           |  |
| Samara Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .    | 390                              | 155             | 59              | 32    | 144              | —         | 40.0                           |  |
| Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies . . . . .                    | 444                              | 101             | 111             | 54    | 41               | 91        | 22.7                           | The position of 46 Deputies is not clear |
| Kharkov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .   | 527                              | 120             | 40              | 150   | —                | —         | 20.9                           |  |
| Kronstadt Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . . | 419                              | 136             | 128             | 124   | 31               | —         | 30.2                           |  |
| Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .     | 337                              | 184             | 25              | 62    | 21               | 41        | 53.7                           |  |
| Revel Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .     | 258                              | 102             | 15              | 97    | 19               | 23        | 39.5                           |  |

\* Based on the following sources and research works: C.S.A.O.R., U.S.S.R., File 1235; V. A. Antonov-Saratovsky, *Under the Banner of the Proletarian Struggle*, Vol. 1, Moscow-Leningrad, 1925, p. 145; I. Braginsky, op. cit., p. 71; V. I. Lobakhin, op. cit., p. 235; V. Knorin, *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Byelorussia*, Part I, pp. 24, 25; *the Star*, Revel, October 19, 1917; *The Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in the Samara Gubernia*, pp. 174, 175 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> V. Knorin, *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Byelorussia*, Part I, Minsk, 1920, pp. 24, 25 (Russ. ed.).

of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies is now the only organ which retains authority in the eyes of the population."<sup>1</sup>

The Bolshevizing of the Soviets gained momentum everywhere in the course of the struggle against the Kornilov revolt. This is shown by the data we possess relating to the composition of the biggest city Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the autumn of 1917.

By winning to their side more and more sections of the workers, soldiers and peasants, the Bolsheviks were now steadily guiding the nation towards the socialist revolution.

## 2. THE SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES AT THE TIME OF THE DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

In late August 1917 and at the beginning of September a peculiar situation arose in Russia. The rapid liquidation of the counter-revolutionary plot had demonstrated the inability of the bourgeoisie either to destroy the Soviets and the revolutionary committees or to impose a military dictatorship on the country. At the same time the proletariat had grown considerably in strength and shown its ability of rallying round itself the peasantry and other democratic strata of the population. The positions of the main political parties had also changed radically. Whereas in the early months after the revolution the liberals—the Cadets—had clothed themselves in democratic and even revolutionary dress and had penetrated into the Soviets and the soldiers' and peasants' committees, during the Kornilov revolt they had exposed themselves as the chief party of counter-revolution. At this dramatic turn of history certain shifts occurred in the ranks of the petty-bourgeois parties. During the Kornilov revolt a large proportion of Left S.R.s and Menshevik-Internationalists had supported the Bolsheviks and been active in the anti-Kornilov struggle. These Left tendencies in petty-bourgeois democracy, combined with the shift to revolutionary positions first of the Petrograd and then of the Moscow Soviets, compelled the S.R. and Menshevik leaders to revise (if only for a brief period) their views on the question of organising state power. On the night of August 31-September 1 the S.R. Central Committee decided that it would withdraw its Ministers from the Government if the Cadets rejoined it.<sup>2</sup> And a reso-

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Secretariat..., Vol. I, pp. 327, 328 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> Rabochy, emergency issue, September 1, 1917.

lution passed by the Menshevik Central Committee, also on August 31, said: "The participation of representatives of the Cadet Party in the Provisional Government is not at all acceptable at the present time."<sup>1</sup>

The Bolshevik Party and its Leninist Central Committee closely followed the political events in the country and worked out the tactics appropriate to the new conditions of struggle. The aggravated Government crisis, the helplessness of the bourgeoisie, the immeasurably increased strength of the working class, the regeneration of the Soviets, the formation of the Red Guards and, finally, the prospect of the petty-bourgeois parties breaking away from the Cadets, all created a second opportunity (for a brief period of time) for making a peaceful transition to Soviet power without an armed uprising. This would have involved replacing the alliance of the petty-bourgeois parties with the Cadets by an agreement between the Bolsheviks and the S.R.s and Mensheviks. Lenin advanced this idea first in a letter to the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B) on August 30, 1917, and then in his article "On Compromise".<sup>2</sup>

The kind of state that could have been formed at this time if things had turned out favourably would have been a democratic proletarian-peasant republic, i.e., a stage on the way to the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>3</sup> So in the situation created by the new upsurge in the revolutionary movement the Bolshevik Party offered the petty-bourgeois parties a compromise for the purpose of securing the speedy and bloodless victory of the Soviet revolution. Such a compromise would have meant the Bolsheviks agreeing to go back to their pre-July demand for the transfer of all power to the Soviets and the formation of a government, without the Cadets, responsible to the Soviets. In return the Bolsheviks required only freedom of political agitation.

The prestige of the petty-bourgeois alliance with the Cadets had now fallen so low that even mention of it evoked bitter feelings among workers and revolutionary soldiers and sailors. At the same time the authority of the Soviets has grown so much that a Soviet Government formed by the Mensheviks and S.R.s might have been able to consolidate itself, and in any case Lenin and the Bolsheviks firmly believed that the further advance of the revolution—combined with continued party struggle within the Soviets and the deepening of the

<sup>1</sup> I. F. Petrov, *The Strategy and Tactics of the Bolshevik Party in Preparing for the Victory of the October Revolution*, pp. 333, 334 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, pp. 285-89, 305-10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. 24, p. 471.

workers' and soldiers' political experience—would lead in the long run to the establishing of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

August 28 to September 1 was a very tense period precisely because there was the dramatic, and perfectly realistic, possibility of a revolutionary government being formed. Lenin wrote: "Now, and only now, perhaps during only a few days or a week or two, such a government could be set up and consolidated in a perfectly peaceful way. In all probability it could secure the peaceful advance of the whole Russian revolution."<sup>1</sup>

However, because he was fully aware of the class character of the petty-bourgeois parties and the fact that their leaders were constantly attracted to the bourgeoisie, Lenin also foresaw the possibility of the Mensheviks and S.R.s rejecting the compromise suggested by the Bolsheviks. Speaking of his doubts about the ability of the conciliators to make a final break with the Cadets, Lenin said: "Perhaps this is already impossible? Perhaps. But if there is even one chance in a hundred, the attempt at realising this opportunity is still worth while."<sup>2</sup>

Lenin's apprehensions did not prove to be without basis. Having made a move to the left during the Kornilov revolt, the Mensheviks and the S.R.s quickly began to "correct" themselves. As soon as the danger of a counter-revolutionary coup had gone these "revolutionaries" of yesterday busied themselves with looking for ways to make it up with the Cadets. Having rejected the Bolsheviks' resolution "On Power", the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies gave a vote of confidence to Kerensky and approved his counter-revolutionary "Directory".<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to justify this line taken by the Right-wing S.R. leaders, *Dyelo Naroda* wrote: "We must reiterate time and again that the moment has not yet come for power to be transferred to revolutionary democracy and that the latter is not prepared for it."<sup>4</sup> The Menshevik *Rabochaya Gazeta* also severely criticised the programme for forming a government proposed by the Bolsheviks and rejected it.<sup>5</sup>

The news that the Mensheviks and the S.R.s had refused to break with the Cadets and to strike an agreement with the Bolsheviks took two days to reach Helsingfors. Lenin at once wrote an epilogue to his article "On Compromise", in which he said: "Yes, to all appearances,

the days when by chance the path of peaceful development became possible have already passed."<sup>1</sup>

In full accordance with their doctrine that the Second Russian Revolution was entirely bourgeois in character, the Mensheviks and S.R.s underestimated the part played by the Soviets and tried to shift the nation onto the road of bourgeois parliamentarism. This was the purpose of the second national conference of the revolution's "living forces" (by analogy with the Moscow State Conference). The conciliators thus trampled on the decision of the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to convene the Second Congress of Soviets within three months, or earlier if circumstances required. A joint meeting of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies on September 2 resolved instead to convene a so-called Democratic Conference.<sup>2</sup>

A cable addressed to local Soviets and other democratic bodies throughout the country and signed by Chkhheidze and Avksentev stated that the aim of the Conference was "to solve the question of organising a government able to lead the nation until the Constituent Assembly is convened".<sup>3</sup> In fact the leaders of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s were primarily anxious to find a way of justifying their new deal with the Cadets and to make a show at least of democracy's "unity" with the Provisional Government. Not surprisingly therefore the C.E.C. and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies took steps to restrict to a minimum the representation of the revolutionary workers, soldiers and sailors at the Democratic Conference. Indeed, the Soviets of Deputies—the mass working people's political organisations—were almost deprived of the possibility of participating usefully in the Democratic Conference. All local Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and peasants' Soviets received only 240 seats between them, while the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and regional associations of Soviets were allotted 100 seats each. Of the bourgeois-democratic organs of self-government the City Dumas got 300 seats, the Zemstvos 200, the co-operatives 150, and so on. Later on the number of participants in the Democratic Conference was increased by representatives of Right-wing bodies of the worst kind: 12 seats went to the Cossacks' unions and 40 to the food and supplies authorities, etc.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 1, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Dyelo Naroda*, September 2, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Rabochaya Gazeta*, September 2, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 3, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66.

<sup>4</sup> *Rech*, September 5, 1917.

Originally, the Bolshevik Party decided to participate in the Democratic Conference but advanced a definite programme of its own, the major demands of which were the transfer of all power throughout the country to the Soviets and the immediate convocation of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets. Meanwhile central and non-central Party bodies explained to the people that "the cardinal issues of the revolution will not be solved at meetings and conferences but in open struggle".<sup>1</sup> The Petrograd Committee and the district and factory organisations of the Bolshevik Party made great efforts to inform the workers and soldiers of the true aims of the Democratic Conference and of the positions of the various political parties in relation to it.

The workers of the Pipe, Ammunition, Nevsky Shipbuilding, Semannikovsky and other factories called meetings to elect delegates to the Democratic Conference and to the Petrograd Soviet. The speakers were A. S. Bubnov, M. M. Volodarsky, A. V. Lunacharsky, A. M. Kollontai, N. V. Krylenko, V. I. Nevsky, N. A. Skrypnik and M. S. Uritsky. These meetings revealed the general shift of the workers away from the conciliators towards support for the demands of the Bolsheviks.

The S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the C.E.C. of the Soviets, of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and of the Petrograd Soviet tried to foist the idea on the people that the Democratic Conference would be of "great national importance" and that it should therefore be supported in every way. The S.R. faction of the Petrograd Soviet called on the workers and soldiers "to promote in every possible way the work of the Conference in order to help strengthen its authority".<sup>2</sup>

The question of the Democratic Conference was discussed by the Petrograd Soviet on September 11. The Soviet decided to take "an active part" in the Conference, while expressing its firm conviction that the six months' experience of the revolution, the terrible plight of the working people, and the total failure of the policy of conciliation with the bourgeoisie, as demonstrated by the Kornilov revolt, "would rally all truly revolutionary forces around the programme of the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets".<sup>3</sup>

On September 7 an extended meeting of the Moscow Regional Bureau of Soviets took place. This also passed a Bolshevik resolution stressing that "only a government based on the Soviets and other revolutionary-democratic bodies can defend the interests of the peo-

ple" and declaring that it would be absolutely unacceptable for Cadets and members of other bourgeois parties that had compromised themselves during the Kornilov revolt to work in governing bodies.<sup>4</sup>

Protests came in from all parts of the land complaining about the anti-democratic procedure being used to convene the Conference, and about the gross violation by the S.R.s and Mensheviks of the rights of the local Soviets and revolutionary committees. There was practically no Soviet which did not express its view on the current situation.

The Moscow Uyezd Soviet of Workers' Deputies, representing 60,000 organised workers, declared that the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets had not lived up to the confidence shown in it by the proletariat, had ignored the decision to convene the Second Congress of Soviets at a fixed date and had instead replaced it by the Democratic Conference—at which there was to be little or no representation of the local Soviets. The deputies demanded that a delegation elected by the Soviet be admitted to the Conference, and that the Second Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies—"the only legitimate and authoritative body of the working class and the Army"—be convened without delay.<sup>5</sup>

The E.C. of the Lugansk Soviet commissioned Voroshilov to go to the Democratic Conference and told him to demand that the new government "come from the Soviets and be responsible to them".<sup>6</sup>

The mandate to the delegates at the Conference from the Yaroslavl Soviet said that the only way to get rid of the constant political crises was to finish once and for all with the policy of conciliation and "to form a single government of workers, soldiers and peasants".<sup>7</sup> The Stary-Oskol Uyezd Soviet of Peasants' Deputies in Kursk Gubernia warned against the possibility of the "socialists" forming another coalition with the Cadets, protested against the adventuristic policies of the Provisional Government and advocated the formation of a government from representatives of the revolutionary proletariat and the peasantry.<sup>8</sup>

The autumn of 1917 also saw a decisive change in the mood of the soldiers. The growth of their dissatisfaction with the Provisional

<sup>1</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 8, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 274.

<sup>3</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 6, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, September 10, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., September 14, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 23, 1917.

<sup>7</sup> *Trud i Borba* (Work and Struggle), Yaroslavl, September 19, 1917.

<sup>8</sup> *Kursk in the Revolution*, Collection of Documents and Materials, Kursk, 1927, p. 91 (Russ. ed.).

Government's anti-popular policies can be seen in the reports that came in from the front lines. Delegates of 23 Siberian and Latvian infantry regiments of the 12th Army met on September 10 and unanimously carried a resolution opposing the "Directory" that had usurped power. The soldiers instructed their delegate to insist on the transfer of power to the Soviets at the Democratic Conference, on convening the Constituent Assembly on the date that had been fixed for it, and on the extension of the rights of soldiers' committees, including the right to elect commanding personnel.<sup>1</sup> On September 11, the regimental committees of the 70th Infantry Division of the Northern Front held a general meeting at which those present sharply criticised their Army Committee for having estranged themselves from the soldiers' organisations and issued a statement saying: "If the Army Committee's delegates to the Democratic Conference express ideas and ambitions that are not ours, let them be treated as representatives of a body which we do not trust and to whom we lend no authority".<sup>2</sup>

So while the Democratic Conference was being convened two sharply opposed viewpoints on the question of organising power were defined: that of the revolutionary workers, soldiers and poorest peasants led by the Bolsheviks, who wanted power to be transferred to the Soviets immediately and who categorically rejected any new coalition with the bourgeoisie, and that of the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies who were doing their utmost to retain power in the hands of the bourgeoisie and who persisted in their alliance with the Cadets.

The Democratic Conference was held in Petrograd from September 14 to 22. According to the incomplete records of the credentials commission 1,582 delegates attended. 1,198 of them stated their party allegiance and of these there were 532 S.R.s, 305 Mensheviks, 134 Bolsheviks, 55 Popular Socialists and Trudoviks, 97 delegates representing the national petty-bourgeois parties (the Bundists, Ukrainian Social-Democrats, Ukrainian S.R.s, etc.), 41 Cadets, and others.<sup>3</sup> The Bolsheviks thus comprised little more than 10 per cent of all participants in the Conference while the S.R. and Menshevik bloc comprised 70 per cent.

The Conference was opened by Chkheidze, Chairman of the C.E.C.

<sup>1</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 19, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in September 1917. The General National Crisis*, p. 421 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 17, 1917.

He appealed to "revolutionary democracy" to unite on the basis of the platform adopted by the Moscow State Conference, i.e., he made it very clear that he was in favour of a coalition with the Cadets. Former Socialist Ministers Chernov, Tsereteli, Skobelev and Zarudny also spoke at the Democratic Conference. All to a greater or lesser degree insisted on the necessity of coming to an agreement with "the propertied elements" (industrialists, financiers and landowners). At the same time, the facts they adduced in their speeches testified to the cowardice and inability of the coalition Government to put an end to the intrigues of the counter-revolutionaries.

The speech of the ex-Minister of Law Zarudny was particularly frank. He told the Conference of how the former ministers had covered up the Prime Minister's backstage dealings with the organisers of the Kornilov revolt. Zarudny presented a picture of the Provisional Government's inertness and its failure to keep its numerous promises to strengthen the armed forces and to take serious steps to secure peace, etc.<sup>1</sup> These "revelations" of the ex-Minister caused no embarrassment to the S.R. and Menshevik majority at the Conference.

Lenin angrily exposed the conciliators in the press and their attempts to divert the people from the solution of the burning questions of the revolution with their talk of a "Russian republican system". He wrote in an article entitled "Heroes of Fraud and the Mistakes of the Bolsheviks" that Zarudny's speech had presented the clearest picture of the depths to which S.R. and Menshevik rottenness and the toadying of the parties of "revolutionary democracy" to the Cadets had sunk. Lenin also stated that as soon as the anti-popular character of the Democratic Conference had been made so clear, the Bolsheviks should have left it and gone to the factories and to the soldiers to explain to them the nature of this "farcical assembly".<sup>2</sup>

The central item on the agenda of the Democratic Conference was the question of the organisation of state power. A vote taken on September 19 revealed the failure of the Mensheviks' and S.R.s' plans to get "the whole of democracy" to endorse their alliance with the Cadets. Only 182 voted in favour of a coalition with the bourgeoisie, 813 against, with 80 abstentions.<sup>3</sup> Delegates from the City Dumas, Zemstvos, the co-operatives, and from most of the front-line and army committees voted for continued co-operation with "propertied elements". The Right-wing S.R. leaders of the C.E.C. and of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies voted for a coalition

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 47-51.

<sup>3</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 20, 1917.

government, while the overwhelming majority of the representatives of local Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and peasants' Soviets from all over the country voted against such a coalition.

This vote demonstrated the increasing differentiation among the non-proletarian sections of the population between the upper strata of petty-bourgeois democracy, which had merged with the big bourgeoisie, and the more numerous middle and lower sections which were moving over to the side of the proletariat and the Bolshevik Party. Lenin said that though the Conference had been convened by "yesterday's leaders in the Soviets, Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks", it was obvious that "the actual degree to which the Bolsheviks predominate in the Soviets is here *understated*".<sup>1</sup>

After being defeated in sectional votes, the leaders of the C.E.C. transferred the debate on the coalition to an extended meeting of the presidium of the Conference. However, most members of the presidium also came out in favour of forming "a homogeneous government" without bourgeois participation. Describing the progressive shift of the working people away from the petty-bourgeois parties, the Right-wing S.R. leader Chernov wrote: "The Democratic Conference witnessed a complete split in the ideas and sympathies of democracy".<sup>2</sup>

Tsereteli took upon himself the task of leading the conciliators out of their predicament. He proposed to the Democratic Conference on behalf of the Menshevik and S.R. factions that it set up a Council of the Russian Republic (Pre-parliament) authorised "to promote the formation of a government". Then, he said, "if propertied elements are drawn into the government, this body can and must be supplemented by delegates from bourgeois groups".<sup>3</sup> In this way the Mensheviks and Right S.R.s stubbornly clung to the idea of a coalition with the bourgeoisie.

What was the point of forming a Pre-parliament? In the first place it was easier for the Menshevik and S.R. leaders to come to an agreement with the Cadets within a closer circle (compared even to the restricted Democratic Conference) on the formation of a "new" coalition government. But above all the Pre-parliament was to act as a screen behind which the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties could organise, in collusion with the Cadets, the liquidation of the Soviets. This was exactly what the Bolsheviks had warned the people of. The

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> V. Chernov, *The Soviets in Our Revolution. The Year of the Russian Revolution (1917-1918)*, p. 61 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 21, 1917.

statement made by the Bolshevik faction at the closing session of the Democratic Conference (on September 22) read: "As for the Pre-parliament or Council of the Russian Republic we have the following to say: 1) its composition has been chosen, like that of the conference, to the detriment of the representatives of the peasants, soldiers and workers; and 2) in line with this, neither the organisers nor the inspirers of the Pre-parliament have set the task of creating a democratic government, but, as always, that of seeking agreement with the bourgeoisie led by the counter-revolutionary Cadet Party". The Bolsheviks also declared once again from the rostrum of the Democratic Conference that the only way to end the power crisis was to transfer all power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.<sup>4</sup>

The plan for the bourgeois Pre-parliament was hatched by the followers of Kerensky as well as by the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the C.E.C. The Democratic Conference had hardly finished when talks on the formation of the third (and last) coalition government began in the Winter Palace. Along with members of the Directory—the Cadet leaders Nabokov, Adjemov, Kishkin and the Moscow millionaires Tretyakov, Smirnov and Konovalov—those taking part in the talks included members of the presidium of the Democratic Conference—Avksentyev, Chkheidze, Tsereteli and some others.

Prime Minister Kerensky reported that "because of the prevailing political situation" he planned "to organise a temporary parliament [Pre-parliament.—A.A.] subordinate to the Government" on the following conditions:

1) "that only the Provisional Government shall handle the organisation and extension of the number of members of the Pre-parliament;

2) "that the assembly (Pre-parliament) does not take on the functions and rights of a true parliament; and

3) "that the Provisional Government shall not be responsible to this assembly".<sup>2</sup>

Fearing that power could really pass to the Soviets, the S.R. and Menshevik C.E.C. leaders capitulated to the Cadets. On September 23 the first (and the last) session of the Council of the Republic took place at which Tsereteli read a paper on the results of the talks in the Winter Palace. A resolution written by F. Dan was passed which described the conciliators' agreement with the Directory on the for-

<sup>1</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 23, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Rech*, September 23, 1917.

mation of a Pre-parliament as "a big step". The resolution also expressed the hope that the Government's formal responsibility to parliament would be established.<sup>1</sup>

On September 25 Kerensky signed a Government declaration composed by the Cadets (with Tsereteli's participation). This stated that the Provisional Government intended to work out and to publish "in the near future" the Constitution of the Provisional Council of the Republic, which "democratic" body was to represent "all sections of the population". It was to be allowed to address questions to the Provisional Government while the latter merely promised to take into account opinions so expressed.<sup>2</sup> This was how a "Russian" version of the bourgeois parliament emerged from the collaboration of the S.R.s and the Mensheviks with the Cadets. But its feebleness was admitted even by its organisers. The Menshevik Dan wrote later: "The Council of the Republic was a bastard institution, a compromise."<sup>3</sup>

The formation of a third coalition government and the appearance of the Pre-parliament were correctly understood by the Bolshevik Soviets and by the revolutionary soldiers' and sailors' committees. A resolution carried by the Petrograd Soviet on September 25 said: "We, the Petrograd workers and the garrison, will not support a government of bourgeois omnipotence and counter-revolutionary violence."<sup>4</sup>

The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies expressed its disapproval of the third coalition on September 28. It appealed to the workers and soldiers of the second capital "to mobilise all your strength for the coming battle...."<sup>5</sup>

According to a report of the chief militia board under the Provisional Government made on October 2, Bolshevik resolutions on the current state of affairs were passed by the Soviets of Astrakhan, Vladimir, Helsingfors, Gomel, Kazan, Krasnoyarsk, Kamenets-Podolsk, Nikolayev, Novaya Bukhara, Odessa, Simferopol, Ufa, Kharkov, Chelyabinsk and others (apart from the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets).<sup>6</sup>

The appeals of the C.E.C. to local Soviets "to support and defend the Provisional Council of the Republic with their ever growing in-

fluence"<sup>1</sup> fell on deaf ears, and so the attempts of the Mensheviks and S.R.s to push the nation onto the road of bourgeois parliamentarism and to obviate the transfer of power to the Soviets failed.

### 3. THE BOLSHEVIK ORGANISATIONS AND THE SOVIETS ON THE EVE OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The changes in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets which had taken place in early September considerably speeded up the transition to revolutionary positions of all other Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. *Rabochy Put* wrote in this connection: "We have been told all along: Petrograd is not Russia, and Russia is against you! No, Russia is with us now! Moscow and Odessa, Krasnoyarsk and Tsaritsyn, Samara and Kharkov, Kronstadt and Helsingfors, the Caucasus and the Urals—the Soviets in a whole number of towns big and small are taking the stand of revolutionary social-democracy. The Soviets are taking power into their own hands!"<sup>2</sup>

The movement to establish the full and undivided rule of the Soviets assumed more and more of a mass character and the resolutions of regional, gubernia and other congresses of Soviets indicate that it extended throughout the length and breadth of the land.

The First Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Middle Siberia took place in Krasnoyarsk from September 5 to 10 with delegates from the peasants' Soviets also taking part. All the largest Soviets (Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Omsk, Barnaul, Novonikolayevsk, etc.) were represented. They united some 110,000 workers and soldiers and at least 90,000 peasants. Two-thirds of the delegates to the congress were members of the Bolshevik Party.<sup>3</sup>

The attention of the congress was centred on the question of the role and aims of the working people's mass political organisations in the new wave of the revolution. A resolution "On the Policy of the Soviets" passed by the congress stressed that the sharp industrial crisis, the completely ruined transport system, the desperate food situation, and Kornilov's disorganising activities in the Army, required "the urgent establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasantry—the transfer of all power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 24, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Uestnik Vremennogo Pravitelstva* (Supplement), September 27, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The October Revolution*, Memoirs, Moscow-Leningrad, 1926, p. 115 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 27, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Izvestia*, the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, September 30, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> *Historical Notes*, Vol. 61, p. 51.

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 12, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 8, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, September 21, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Krasnoyarsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 12, 1917.

The congress decided to form a Middle Siberian Regional Association of Soviets and elected a 5-member bureau of the Association. A. I. Okulov, G. I. Teodorovich and G. S. Veinbaum represented the Bolsheviks on it.<sup>1</sup>

The decisions of the First Congress of the Soviets of Middle Siberia were endorsed throughout the region. The Soviets of Tomsk, Achinsk, Kansk, Minusinsk and other towns came out in favour of the formation of a revolutionary Soviet government.<sup>2</sup> And a congress of the Soviets of the Altai Gubernia (September 18-19) demanded an end to conciliation with the bourgeoisie, the transfer of all power to the Soviets, the shifting of the whole burden of the war onto the propertied classes, and so on.<sup>3</sup>

Two gubernia congresses were held in Vladimir in September, a congress of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies and one of the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies. Both were predominantly influenced by the Bolsheviks and both demanded the transfer of power to the Soviets, the nationalisation of the land and the banks and the setting up of workers' control over production.<sup>4</sup>

The S.R.s were in the majority at the Third Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Ufa Gubernia (September 1-2). The S.R.s tried to get through a resolution approving the actions of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies. But under the pressure of the workers' delegates some amendments proposed by the Bolsheviks were included in the draft resolution and the congress came out in favour of resolute support for the steps taken by the C.E.C. to curb the counter-revolution. At the same time the workers of Beloretsk, Sterlitamak and other towns demanded the transfer of full power throughout the country to the Soviets, the convening of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets and the formation of a revolutionary government responsible to the Soviets.<sup>5</sup>

The decisions passed by the Third Regional Congress of the Soviets of the Army, Navy and Workers of Finland (September 9-14) received a warm response, especially from the soldiers and sailors. The Congress rejected the coalition with the bourgeoisie outright, condemned the anti-popular policy of the Provisional Government

on the national question, and called for an end to repressions against the Bolsheviks and the complete democratising of the Army and Navy Commands.

A conciliatory resolution proposed by the former Regional Committee collected only five votes. 37 Bolsheviks, 27 Left-wing S.R.s and one Menshevik-Internationalist made up the new Regional E.C. of the Finnish Soviets. Defencists received no seats on it.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the Congress, the Finnish Regional Committee of Soviets announced its refusal to recognise the Provisional Government and appealed to all Russian workers, soldiers and sailors in Finland to recognise that "all power is, in fact, in the hands of the Regional Committee elected by the Third Congress of Finnish Soviets".<sup>2</sup> This position of the Regional Committee was supported by the Soviets of Vyborg, Helsingfors and the Abo-Aland fortified area, and by Centrobalt and the ships' committees of the Baltic Fleet.

A joint meeting of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies in Vyborg discussed the appeal of the Regional Committee and stated that the Provisional Government had never been authorised to take charge of the destiny of the nation and because it had taken a repressive line the Soviets were obliged to carry on a strenuous and organised struggle against it.<sup>3</sup> Kerensky tried to crush the "rebellious" Vyborg Soviet. A punitive expedition led by the War Minister's assistant Sher (a Menshevik) was sent to Vyborg, and the Finnish Regional Committee prepared the 42nd Army Corps stationed in Vyborg and reserves in Helsingfors for combat. No clash actually occurred, however, because the C.E.C. cancelled the Provisional Government's orders.

The Bolsheviks regarded the revival of the Soviets during the Kornilov revolt, the transition of the Soviets in Petrograd and Moscow and many other Soviets to revolutionary positions and the energetic actions taken by the workers and revolutionary soldiers against collaboration with the bourgeoisie, as important subjective factors favouring a socialist revolution. On September 7, at a session of the Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B), A. I. Slutsky, the main speaker on the current situation, stated that the masses had gener-

<sup>1</sup> V. Safronov, *October in Siberia*, p. 447 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Golos Truda* (The Voice of Labour), Barnaul, September 22, 1917 (Supplement).

<sup>4</sup> 1917 in *Vladimir Gubernia*, pp. 97, 98, 100 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> *Uperyod* (Forward), Ufa, September 3 and 5, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 12 and 16, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, July 5-November 5, 1917*, pp. 460-61 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Correspondence of the G.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Secretariat...*, Vol. I, pp. 275-76 (Russ. ed.).

ally moved further to the left. This situation provided a basis for the Committee to envisage the prospect of "turning the Soviets into combat centres".<sup>1</sup>

Local Bolshevik conferences held in the latter half of September and during October played an important part in raising the standards of leadership of the Soviets.<sup>2</sup> A resolution of the First North-West Regional Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) (September 15-18) on the political situation said that the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies were the only organising centres capable of taking the lead in the new wave of the revolution. And the Bolsheviks of Byelorussia and the Western Front expressed their confidence that "following the Soviets, the soldiers' committees, which have hitherto been under the sway of the conciliators will rise up".<sup>3</sup> The Kiev All-City R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Conference (September 24) observed that the Soviets, by becoming organs of revolution, must become organs of power. The regional conference of the Party's organisations in Finland drew the attention of all Bolsheviks to the importance of deepening their work in the Soviets and soldiers' committees and instructed the Bolsheviks to establish their factions everywhere.

In the autumn of 1917, when the nation was on the verge of the socialist revolution, further theoretical elaboration of the question of the revolution and the state was needed and this was provided by Lenin in his classic book *The State and Revolution*. This developed the Marxist teaching on the destruction of the oppressive apparatus of the bourgeois state and its replacement by the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the shape of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants' and other Deputies. The leader of the revolution outlined a concrete programme for building a socialist state and defined the principal stages of its advance up to the creation of communism.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks did not think of the socialist revolution as a single act ending with the winning of power, but rather as a long and complicated process involving the transformation of the whole of the economic and social basis of modern society. To accomplish this gigantic task it was necessary to rally all labouring people

<sup>1</sup> *The First Legal Petersburg Bolshevik Committee in 1917*, pp. 259-61 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> More than 70 R.S.D.L.P.(B.) conferences took place in September and October 1917. See *The Leninist Party—the Organiser of the October Revolution*, p. 240 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution. July 5-November 5, 1917*, p. 332 (Russ. ed.).

around the proletariat, and above all it was essential to consider the possibility of entering into alliance and coming to agreements with the Left-wing S.R. and Menshevik groupings, as this could facilitate the winning over of the peasantry—and most of the soldiers, too—to the side of the revolution.

After the Kornilov revolt Lenin repeatedly returned to the question of Bolshevik compromise with the petty-bourgeois parties. He dealt with it in his articles "One of the Revolution's Basic Problems", "The Way to Ensure the Success of the Constituent Assembly", "The Russian Revolution and Civil War" and "The Tasks of the Revolution". The Right-wing S.R. and defencist Menshevik leaders of the major petty-bourgeois parties had rejected the possibility of coming to agreements with the Bolsheviks. Therefore the offer of a compromise was now (in mid-September and early October) addressed only to the left elements of petty-bourgeois democracy, a considerable number of whom were leaning more and more to the side of the proletariat.<sup>1</sup>

But winning over the Left S.R.s and cutting them off from the Cadets, though important, was not the most important task of the Bolshevik Party. Between September 12 and 14 Lenin sent two letters, "The Bolsheviks Must Take Power" and "Marxism and Insurrection", to the Central Committee and the Petersburg and Moscow Committees of the Party. After analysing Russia's internal situation and the situation in the world as a whole, Lenin came to the conclusion that all the necessary conditions existed for putting the question of an armed insurrection on the order of the day for the purpose of overthrowing the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government and replacing it by Soviet power.

Lenin attached great significance to the fact that the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets and many of the Soviets throughout the country had moved to the side of the Bolsheviks: "The majority of the people are *on our side*. This was proved by the long and painful course of events from May 6 to August 31 and to September 12. The majority gained in the Soviets of the metropolitan cities resulted from the people coming *over to our side*".<sup>2</sup>

The Social-Democrats in the West and the Russian Mensheviks and S.R.s had for a long time been peddling the legend that a socialist revolution was impossible in Russia in 1917, because, they said, there were no organs to help the revolutionary classes take and hold state power. Lenin convincingly proved the incorrectness of this

<sup>1</sup> See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

"idea". He answered his opponents: "There is no apparatus! There is an apparatus—the Soviets and the democratic organisations."<sup>1</sup>

Lenin warned that at that time (the first half of September) it was not possible to talk of the actual date and "moment" of the uprising in the narrow sense. The first and foremost task was to make the members of the Bolshevik Party aware of the need for an armed uprising so that they should regard the future fate of the Soviets in the light of this.<sup>2</sup> "The Soviets will be able to develop properly, to display their potentialities and capabilities to the full only by taking over *full* state power; for otherwise they have *nothing to do*."<sup>3</sup>

Lenin's idea of reviving (on a new basis) the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" was taken up by the Bolsheviks' organisations and it later became the militant watchword of the workers and poor peasants who rose to storm the citadel of the bourgeoisie and the land-owners.

Pressed by the revolutionary masses and by the numerous nationwide demands of the local Soviets, the S.R. and Menshevik C.E.C. decided at last to convene the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets not later than October 20.<sup>4</sup> But there was no guarantee that the conciliators would keep their word. Active steps were necessary to prevent the further postponement of the Congress. On September 28 the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) sent a circular to Party organisations suggesting a campaign for the election of delegates to the Congress of Soviets and also recommending the simultaneous holding of re-elections to the Soviets, the calling of district and regional congresses of Soviets wherever possible and the convocation of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets on a fixed date.<sup>5</sup>

The speeches of the Bolsheviks who participated in the Democratic Conference played an important part in the work of uniting the people around the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" and of preparing the workers and soldiers for an armed uprising against the Provisional Government to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The results of the Democratic Conference were discussed in Moscow on September 28 at a joint meeting of the executive committees of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. V. P. Nogin asserted that the Conference that had just ended could be described as

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 24, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *The Correspondence of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, Vol. I, pp. 52-53 (Russ. ed.).

democratic in only a conditional sense, and that the newly formed coalition Government would be incapable of ending the prolonged political crisis; it would rather provoke a civil war. The only way out of the situation was a strenuous struggle for the transfer of all power to the Soviets.<sup>1</sup>

The Narva Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, after hearing and discussing a speech by their delegate V. E. Kingissepp, passed a resolution stating that only an All-Russia Congress of Soviets could form a truly revolutionary government and that if the C.E.C. hindered its convocation then the Petrograd Soviet itself should convene it, in which case it would get the backing of all other Soviets.<sup>2</sup> A general meeting of the workers of the Army's horseshoe-making factory in Petrograd, after listening to a speech by the Bolshevik V. S. Kudryashov (a member of the Petrograd Soviet), declared that they would be deceived neither by democratic conferences nor by Pre-parliaments: "We trust only the Soviets and will fight for Soviet power to the end."<sup>3</sup>

Feeling that the ground was slipping from under its feet the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie became "nervous", and capable of any provocation. At one with it were the Right-wing S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies. On September 30 the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party issued the following warning to the workers, soldiers, sailors and peasants: "The Congress of the Soviets can be convened only in the face of the opposition of the conciliators, who, in the person of Dan and the official *Izvestia*, have already begun an open campaign against its convocation. The Congress of Peasants' Deputies can likewise be convened only against Avksentьев and Co., who shamelessly fail to call a congress despite the insistence of the peasants' delegates."<sup>4</sup>

The Bolsheviks called on the working people not to give in to the bourgeoisie on any of the positions they had gained, and urged them to convene regional and gubernia congresses of Soviets everywhere and to elect as delegates to the All-Russia Congress of Soviets staunch revolutionaries and enemies of conciliation. On the eve of the greatest turning-point in the destiny of the peoples of Russia, the Bolshevik Party made the confident declaration that "Power will go to the workers, soldiers and peasants. That is inevitable!"

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, September 29, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, Narva Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 7, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>4</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 30, 1917.

#### 4. NEW ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES AND PRESIDIUMS OF SOVIETS. THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF THE SOVIETS IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE NATION

The taking up of revolutionary positions by the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets and many of the non-metropolitan Soviets opened up for the Bolsheviks the possibility of struggling successfully to change the party composition of the executive committees and presidiums of the Soviets, and in this way to ensure that decisions taken by Soviets were actually implemented.

The conciliators in Petrograd thought they would be able to keep the E.C. of the City Soviet in their grip by means of demagogic. F. Dan, a member of the Executive Committee, announced that the Menshevik and S.R. factions did not agree with the new line of the Soviet and that the presidium would resign. The leaders of the S.R. and Menshevik bloc then tried to intimidate the deputies by saying that with Chkheidze and his followers out of the leading organs of the Soviet "the front of revolutionary democracy will become weak". And even when the Soviet was to meet to settle the future direction of its work, the S.R.s and the Mensheviks insisted that the meeting would be "an unusual session" which would vote in their favour.<sup>1</sup>

A full meeting of the Petrograd Soviet on September 9 considered the question of the election of a new presidium and, once again, its attitude to the coalition. The S.R.s and Mensheviks declared that the resolution "On Power" passed on August 31 had been carried when many delegates were absent. Furthermore, they proposed that a vote of confidence be taken in the former presidium and new elections to the Executive Committee indefinitely postponed on the grounds that the fresh election of all deputies was being considered anyway. But the defencists miscalculated their move. The plenum re-endorsed the Bolshevik resolution "On Power" in a roll-call vote by 519 votes to 414, with 67 abstentions. This was in effect a vote of no confidence in the conciliators, and they could do nothing but publicly admit their defeat. Chairman of the Soviet Chkheidze and presidium members Anisimov, Dan, Gots, Skobelev, Chernov and Tsereteli resigned and left the conference hall. They were provisionally replaced (pending the next elections) by the combined presidiums of the workers' and soldiers' sections.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 9, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 10, 1917; *People's Cause*, September 10, 1917.

*Rabochy Put* commented: "In the history of revolutionary Petrograd, September 9 will mark a turning point... This truly 'unusual session' announced in a loud voice to the whole of revolutionary Russia that the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies trusted the Mensheviks and S.R.s no more, and that from henceforth the Soviet's political line would be a Bolshevik one."<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviks received 239 votes in the election on September 8 of a new presidium of the workers' section; the S.R.s won 102 votes, the Mensheviks 54 and the Menshevik-Internationalists 10 votes. An 11-member presidium was elected—6 Bolsheviks, 3 S.R.s and 2 Mensheviks. The Bolshevik G. F. Fedorov was elected chairman of the workers' section.<sup>2</sup> The soldiers' section met five days later to re-elect its representatives on the E.C. of the Soviet. 138 soldiers voted for the Bolsheviks, 155 for the S.R.s, and 39 for the Mensheviks. As a result 9 Bolsheviks, 10 Left-wing S.R.s and 3 Mensheviks were elected to the E.C.<sup>3</sup> Many former E.C. members were defeated and the ex-chairman of the soldiers' section, the Right-wing S.R. V. Zavadye, resigned.<sup>4</sup> Shortly afterwards the soldiers' section also elected a new section presidium. It included 3 Bolsheviks, 3 Left-wing S.R.s and one Menshevik. The Left S.R. L. I. Diesperov became chairman of the soldiers' section and the Bolshevik A. D. Sadovsky remained leader of the Soviet's Army Department.<sup>5</sup>

The re-election of the Soviet's E.C. was now the next event of importance. The inertia of the S.R. and Menshevik E.C. during "the Kornilov days" fully confirmed the belief in the minds of the working people and the active members of the district Soviets that the removal of the conciliators from the leadership would make possible the regeneration of the Petrograd Soviet and transform it into a militant centre for rallying the revolutionary masses. In early September the Interdistrict Conference of Soviets instructed its presidium to open negotiations with the presidium of the workers' and the executive of the soldiers' sections of the Petrograd Soviet "to discuss at a joint meeting the question of regenerating the Executive Committee of the Soviet, even if it has first to be reformed".<sup>6</sup> The Interdistrict Conference then recommended all district Soviets to call general meetings

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., September 12, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 9, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Soldat*, September 14, 1917; *Rabochy Put*, September 15, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> S.A.O.R.S.G., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in August 1917. The Defeat of the Kornilov Revolt*, p. 538 (Russ. ed.).

to explain the existing situation to deputies and to raise the question of the re-election of the E.C. of the City Soviet.<sup>1</sup>

The recommendations of the Interdistrict Conference were accepted by nearly all district Soviets. The E.C. of the Vyborg District Soviet passed a resolution saying that the Petrograd Soviet E.C. had throughout its entire existence conducted a policy contrary to the interests of the working class and demanding the fresh election of the E.C. at the next plenum of the Soviet.<sup>2</sup> S. M. Nakhimson, speaking in a debate of the First Gorodskoy (City) District Soviet on the directive of the Interdistrict Conference, reminded deputies that the existing Petrograd Soviet E.C. had been set up arbitrarily in the early days of the revolution and had never been re-elected, and that it therefore represented no one. The meeting of the First Gorodskoy District Soviet went on to point out that an executive body would be trusted only if it protected the interests of Petrograd workers.<sup>3</sup>

On September 23-24 the workers' section elected its new representatives to the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet. 396 deputies voted. 230 votes went to the Bolsheviks, 102 to the S.R.s, 54 to the Mensheviks and 10 votes to the Menshevik-Internationalists. 13 Bolsheviks were elected to the Executive Committee (Bubnov, Kollontai, Krasikov, Karakhan, Fedorov and eight others) along with six S.R.s and three Mensheviks.<sup>4</sup>

The first meeting of the new Petrograd Soviet E.C. was held on September 26. It was now 51-strong: 22 representatives each from the workers' and soldiers' sections, four from political parties and three from public bodies (the trade unions, the factory committees and Army organisations). The party allegiance of the members of the E.C. was as follows: 23 Bolsheviks, 17 S.R.s, seven Mensheviks, and four non-party deputies. There were also two representatives from each district Soviet with advisory powers and six members of the former E.C. The conciliators had tried to include all "the original initiators of the Petrograd Soviet", i.e., to retain an S.R. and Menshevik majority, but they failed in this.<sup>5</sup>

After the presidiums of the workers' and soldiers' sections had been renewed and a new executive committee elected, it remained to form the new presidium of the whole Soviet. This was especially im-

portant as it was the presidium that held the preliminary debates on all points of major concern and it therefore more often than not determined the fate of particular proposals in the E.C. and at the plenary meetings of the Soviet.

On September 6 the question of the membership of the presidium of the Petrograd Soviet was discussed at a session of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.). Trotsky and Zinoviev forced through a decision to form a coalition presidium based on the proportional representation of the Bolshevik, S.R. and Menshevik parties.<sup>1</sup> This was a very obvious mistake as the Petrograd Soviet had now taken a revolutionary stand and the time when it was desirable to form blocs in its leading organ had gone, to say nothing of coming to an agreement with the defencist Mensheviks. When Lenin learned of Zinoviev's praise for this wrong decision of the C.C., he wrote: "The revolutionary proletariat would never do anything worth while *in the Soviet* as long as the Tseretelis were allowed proportional participation; to let them in meant *depriving ourselves* of the opportunity to work, it meant *the ruin of Soviet work*."<sup>2</sup> The new membership of the presidium, as proposed by the factions, was endorsed by the plenum of the Petrograd Soviet on September 25. It included four Bolsheviks, two S.R.s and one Menshevik.<sup>3</sup>

Great changes also resulted in the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies from the passing of the Bolshevik resolution "On Power" on September 5. The Soviet's chairman, the Menshevik Khinchuk, resigned. In accordance with decisions of the S.R. and Menshevik factions, Cherepanov, Kibrik and others also announced that they were leaving the E.C. and the presidium. New elections to the executive organs of the Moscow Soviet then followed on September 19,<sup>4</sup> with these results: out of a total of 462 voters, 246 voted for the Bolshevik list of candidates, 65 for the S.R.s, 125 for the Mensheviks and 26 for the *Unity* group members. 32 Bolsheviks were included on the E.C. alongside nine S.R.s, 16 Mensheviks and three *Unity* group members. The 9-man presidium that was elected comprised five Bolsheviks, two Mensheviks, one S.R. and one *Unity* group member.<sup>5</sup>

Matters were more complicated as regards the changes in the executive organs of the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. After their defeat on September 5 at the joint meeting of the Soviet of Work-

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 101.

<sup>2</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in September 1917. The General National Crisis*, pp. 156-57 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 54.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 26, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 27, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 26, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, September 18, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., September 20, 1917.

ers' and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies, the conciliators decided to disrupt the work of the executive committee of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies and to lay the blame for it on the Bolsheviks. The chairman of the Soviet, the Right-wing S.R. Urnov, read the following statement to an E.C. meeting on September 9: "Since the resolution on the current situation passed at the joint meeting of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on September 5 this year runs counter to the entire political line on which the work of the Soviets has been based up to the present time, we, the presidium members of the Socialist Revolutionary and the Menshevik Social-Democratic factions do not consider it possible to implement the political slogans that the Soviet has adopted. We therefore resign...." This statement was signed by almost all the Mensheviks and S.R.s on the E.C. (those who were not able to attend the meeting sent in written statements in support of the line taken by their leaders).<sup>1</sup>

But the Bolsheviks declared that they were not going to give up their duties as deputies and that "in the present situation it would be better for the Mensheviks and S.R.s to leave the Soviet".<sup>2</sup> A new E.C. of the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies was elected on September 18. The Bolsheviks won 127 votes, while the S.R. and Menshevik list received 273 votes. 16 Bolsheviks, 26 S.R.s, nine Mensheviks and nine non-party deputies went onto the E.C.<sup>3</sup> The S.R. and Menshevik bloc thus continued to prevail in the soldiers' Soviet even after the September elections, but this situation was not to last for long. Having won over a third of the votes, the Bolsheviks were able to step up their activity to win over both the Soviet and the whole of the Moscow garrison to their side.

First they paid attention to improving the work of the Bolshevik faction in the Soviet. This numbered about 100 and held mass functions among the troops. According to documents kept in the archives of the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies the Bolshevik faction first worked out its constitution in September. The task of the faction was defined briefly: "To defend our Party's political line." The Bolsheviks in the soldiers' Soviet were expected to keep themselves informed of everything that was happening and to maintain close contacts with the Party cells in all military units, to be acquainted with and to bear in mind in their work the tactics of other political parties, to put forward proposals that would help to unite the soldiers around the Bolshevik Party, to contribute to the isolation of

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 684.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, September 20, 1917.

the Mensheviks and the S.R.s and to encourage the soldiers' own revolutionary initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

After the October Revolution the E.C. of the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies was elected once again. This time, having at last freed themselves of their S.R. "bosses", the soldiers gave their entire support to the Bolsheviks. 216 voters out of 234 cast their votes for the Bolshevik list. The E.C. then included 55 Bolsheviks, two S.R.s and two Mensheviks.<sup>2</sup>

The initiative of the Petrograd and Moscow workers in changing the composition of their executive bodies was followed by other Soviets throughout the country. Shortly after, fresh elections to the E.C. of the Saratov Soviet took place (on September 21), the Bolsheviks winning 18 seats, the S.R.s eight seats, and the Mensheviks four. Bolshevik V. P. Antonov-Saratovsky became chairman of the Saratov Executive Bureau, and the Bolsheviks M. I. Vasilyev-Yuzhin and P. A. Lebedev deputy chairmen.<sup>3</sup>

Table 4 on p. 292 details the changes in the party composition of the executive committees of the City Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on the eve of the October Revolution.

As can be seen from the table, basic changes occurred in the party composition of the executive committees of the biggest city Soviets in the autumn of 1917, reflecting the mass Bolshevisation of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The S.R. and Menshevik leaders attempted to present the shift of the workers and soldiers away from the petty-bourgeois parties as "a crisis of the Soviet organisation". The *Izvestia* of the C.E.C. wrote in connection with the formation of the Pre-parliament: "The significance of the local Soviets is diminishing, and they have ceased to be general democratic bodies. We want to replace the temporary Soviet set-up by a permanent, comprehensive and complete [i.e., a bourgeois-parliamentary.—A. A.] organisation."<sup>4</sup> One cannot but notice the full identity of views of the Right-wing S.R.s, the defencist Mensheviks and the Cadets. What Milyukov, Maklakov and other Cadet politicians had urged at the State Conference were now being put forward as the opinions of "the whole of democracy". *Dyelo Naroda* wrote: "...as soon as the new elements of the state organisation appeared typical of a modern democratic state—the City Dumas and the Zemstvos—

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 684.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66/40.

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, Saratov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 26, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 12, 1917.

TABLE 4\*

Party Composition of the Executive Committees of the City Soviets  
of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in September-October 1917

| Soviets   | Total<br>number<br>of<br>members | Bolshe-<br>viks | Menshe-<br>viks | S.R.s | Other<br>parties | Non-party | Per cent<br>Bolshe-<br>viks |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . . | 51                               | 23              | 7               | 17    | —                | 4         | 45.0                        |
| Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies . . . . .                  | 60                               | 32              | 16              | 9     | 3                | —         | 53.3                        |
| Saratov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .   | 30                               | 18              | 4               | 8     | —                | —         | 60.0                        |
| Samara Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .    | 30                               | 16              | 6               | 3     | 5                | —         | 53.3                        |
| Kiev Soviet of Workers' Deputies . . . . .                    | 30                               | 14              | 7               | 6     | 3                | —         | 45.2                        |
| Kharkov Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .   | 40                               | 12              | 6               | 15    | 5                | 2         | 30.0                        |
| Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies . . . . .     | 38                               | 23              | 2               | 7     | 6                | —         | 60.0                        |

<sup>1</sup> Based on the following sources and research works: *Rabochy Put*, October 10, 1917; *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, September 20 (October 3), 1917; I. Braginsky, op. cit., p. 73; V. Knorin, *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Byelorussia*. Part 1, pp. 24, 25; *Kharkov and the Kharkov Gubernia in the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Collection of Documents, pp. 165, 166; and other miscellaneous sources.

the question arose of the limits to the state competence of the Soviets....<sup>1</sup>

But both the conciliators and the Cadets were "holding the funeral service at the wrong address". The Soviets had grown vastly in number by October. According to figures supplied by the provincial department of the C.E.C. there were 929 Soviets in all parts of the country on October 9 (excluding the peasants' Soviets).<sup>2</sup> The Central State Archives of the October Revolution and of Socialist Construction of the U.S.S.R. contain lists of the city, uyezd, gubernia, regional and other Soviets of Deputies compiled in the autumn of 1917. They give a figure of 952 Soviets.<sup>3</sup> A slightly different figure is quoted by D.A. Chugayev, who has done some special research on this subject.

<sup>1</sup> *Dyelo Naroda*, October 6, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> C.S.A.O.R., U.S.S.R., File 1235.

<sup>3</sup> C.S.A.O.R., U.S.S.R., File 6978.

He thinks that there were 1,429 Soviets at the time of the October Revolution: 235 joint Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, 706 Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 33 Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies and 455 Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. So he gives the total number of Soviets of Workers' and of Soldiers' Deputies as 974.<sup>1</sup> A comparison of these different sources enables us to say with certainty that there was a 30 per cent increase in the total number of Soviets of Deputies in the four-month period July-October.

Other claims of those who thought there was a "crisis in the Soviets" were no more valid: for example the claim that the masses were apathetic and "disappointed with the Soviets". There was indeed some apathy after the July 3-5 events, some weakening of interest in the Soviets on the part of the workers and soldiers. "The people are tired of the wavering of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries," said Lenin.<sup>2</sup> But this feeling had been brought about by the Mensheviks and the S.R.s themselves, by their conciliatory attitude to the bourgeoisie.

The immense increase in the authority of the Soviets during the Kornilov period and the complete bankruptcy of the coalition of Kerensky, Tsereteli, Chernov and Co. with Nabokov, Maklakov, Konovalov and the other politicians of the "party of people's freedom" again raised the question of the prevailing dual power—but the ways suggested of rectifying the situation differed considerably. The petty-bourgeois socialists, as they wavered between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, tried to "steady" the tottering Provisional Government and to somehow do away with the Soviets of Deputies. The notorious doctrine of "the crisis in the Soviet organisation" was a kind of ideological "justification" supplied by the Right-wing S.R.s and Mensheviks for Kerensky's counter-revolutionary views. The Bolsheviks, guided by Lenin's teachings on the Soviets, realised that "dual power" would, inevitably, mean paralysis for the Soviets,<sup>3</sup> and they therefore did their utmost to ensure that full state power passed to the Soviets.

In the period just prior to the October armed uprising, the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) twice reviewed the work of the Petrograd Soviet and its Executive Committee. Dzerzhinsky, commissioned by the C.C. to report on the work of the E.C. of the Petrograd

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Chugayev, *The History of the Formation and Consolidation of the Soviet State*, Manuscript, Moscow, 1964, p. 10 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

Soviet, spoke of its total disorganisation. This was the practical result of the "proportional representation" insisted on by Zinoviev and Trotsky. In order to improve matters the C.C. decided to appoint Volodarsky, Dzerzhinsky, Milyutin, Stalin, Lashevich and other responsible comrades to work on the Petrograd Soviet E.C.<sup>1</sup>

In Moscow the Bolshevik factions of the City Soviet of Workers' Deputies and of the Moscow Regional Bureau of Soviets made improvements to the organisational and political work of the Soviets. V. P. Nogin read a report on September 27 on the current situation and the tasks of the Soviets to a joint meeting of the executive committees of the Soviet of Workers' and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. The resolution passed by the executive committees stressed that in the existing circumstances the Soviets had to act jointly and in unison. The meeting recommended, therefore, the early calling of regional and gubernia congresses and the convening of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets.<sup>2</sup>

The consistent struggle of the Bolsheviks to see that democratic principles were adhered to during the elections to Soviets contributed greatly to raising the authority of the Soviets. Thanks to the explanatory work of the Bolsheviks the executive committees of the Moscow Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies admitted that their apparatus should be reconstituted "to guarantee the right to replace at any time both members of the Soviets, their executive committees and the C.E.C...."<sup>3</sup>

The adoption by the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets of a revolutionary line involved radical changes in the relations between the latter and the district Soviets. The districts no longer felt hostile to the City Soviets—on the contrary, they wanted to establish business-like contacts with them both on matters of politics and in practical work. The Basmanny, Zamoskvorechye, Rogozhsko-Simonovsky, Presnya and other district Soviets responded with enthusiasm to an appeal to them from the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies to unite all the working people to struggle for Soviet power.<sup>4</sup>

The Bolsheviks foresaw that as soon as the Soviets took power they would have to cope with the serious problems of combating famine and unemployment, and of maintaining regular supplies of raw materials and fuel to the factories. The Bolsheviks therefore recom-

mended that the Soviets create an apparatus to regulate production—supply departments, economic departments, and so on. The mass lock-outs and malicious sabotage of the factory owners were in fact compelling the Soviets to intervene more resolutely in the sphere of production—not stopping, in some cases, at the sequestration of factories and plants. A combined meeting of the Nyazepetrovsk Soviet, the district Soviet of Kyshtym and representatives of the factory and office workers of the Nyazepetrovsk Metal Works (situated in the Urals) took a decision to transfer the works' management to the workers. A committee to make an inventory of the company's property included three representatives of the shop-floor workers, three of the office staff and one of the district Soviet. And in the middle of October the Gorayev and Co. mines were taken over by the mine workers with the help of the local Soviet.<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviks attached especial importance to extending the functions of the Soviets in public life, to promoting workers' control of production, combating sabotage and speculation, and to keeping up regular supplies of raw materials, fuel, etc., to the factories. All this was essential to consolidating the position of the Soviets as the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?" Lenin wrote: "We demand that training in the work of state administration be conducted by class-conscious workers and soldiers and that this training be begun at once, i.e., that a beginning be made at once in training all the working people, all the poor, for this work."<sup>2</sup>

The active intervention of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in the economy demonstrated that the Bolshevikised Soviets had transformed themselves into entirely different bodies, ready to take full power into their hands and capable of organising the national economy along new, socialist lines.

## 5. THE SOVIETS DURING THE "SECOND KORNILOV PERIOD" AND THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE OCTOBER INSURRECTION

The hopes that the Mensheviks and the Right S.R.s had placed on the Democratic Conference and the Provisional Council of the Republic (Pre-parliament) having now been dashed, the social basis of

<sup>1</sup> *The Minutes of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, pp. 69, 117 (Russ. ed.).  
<sup>2</sup> *The Preparations for and the Victory of the October Revolution in Moscow*, pp. 323-24 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, October 5 and 6, 1917; *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, September 30 and October 7, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> *The Struggle for the Victory of the October Socialist Revolution in the Urals*, pp. 271, 272 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 113.

the Cadet-conciliator coalition was further narrowed, and it became ever more evident that the Provisional Government would be able to retain power only on the bayonet ends of the most reactionary sections of the Cossacks and the Army. Kerensky and his accomplices—the Kornilov men realised this only too well, of course. After the Kornilov revolt had failed they therefore began to put into effect another plan to establish a national dictatorship of generals and Cadets.

On September 1 Kerensky issued an order for the political struggle in the Army to be terminated. The soldiers' committees were put under strict orders forbidding the removal or arrest of any of Kornilov's officers, or the "unwarranted" formation of detachments to fight the counter-revolution. This order also put an end to the control exercised by the soldiers over communications and the movement of troops that had been established during the Kornilov revolt.<sup>1</sup> Then the Provisional Government issued a directive (on September 4) abolishing all local bodies that had been set up to fight the counter-revolution. The directive admitted that the special committees set up for security purposes, for the protection of the revolution (the revolutionary committees and headquarters, etc.) had become "the main governing bodies at a local level everywhere in the country" and that they "had succeeded in defending and consolidating the gains of the revolution". But the directive went on to say that the further existence of such bodies "does not correspond to the plans of the Government" and that it would not tolerate their continued activity.<sup>2</sup>

These and similar measures left no one in any doubt that the Government intended to organise a "second Kornilov revolt". In his article "One of the Fundamental Questions of the Revolution", Lenin wrote: "Without deliberately closing one's eyes, one cannot fail to see that after the Kornilov affair Kerensky's government is leaving everything as before, that in fact it is bringing back the Kornilov affair."<sup>3</sup> Lenin went on to explain that without a Soviet government it would be impossible either to defeat the Kornilov counter-revolution (let alone to conduct an investigation into "the Kornilov affair") or to "make Russia secure against the otherwise inevitable repetition of 'Kornilov' attempts".<sup>4</sup>

The Bolsheviks urged the people not to give in to provocations and to refrain from taking isolated actions, and yet not to allow Korni-

lov's men to destroy revolutionary and democratic bodies. *Rabochy Put* wrote: "We are convinced that the revolutionary committees can administer a worthy rebuff to this stab in the back of Kerensky's. We firmly believe that the revolutionary committees will not deviate from their present path."<sup>1</sup>

The Interdistrict Conference of the Soviets of Petrograd formally decided on September 5 not to dissolve the revolutionary organisations that had been set up during the Kornilov revolt and inform the C.E.C. of its decision, supported by the Vyborg, Peterhof and other district Soviets.<sup>2</sup> The Tiflis Soviet issued the following statement at a meeting on September 7: "The provisional revolutionary committee of the Caucasus believes that it has not yet exhausted its functions and therefore does not consider it possible to cease functioning."<sup>3</sup> And the E.C. of the Western Front treated Kerensky's order for the termination of the political struggle in the Army as a counter-revolutionary act "putting the soldiers at the mercy of Kornilov's bandits".<sup>4</sup> The plan to do away with the local anti-Kornilov bodies was only part of an all-out offensive against the Soviets and the soldiers' and sailors' committees. The great "sensation" of Kerensky's government was its "war" on the Tashkent Soviet. The tsarist policy of colonial plunder which the Provisional Government had continued had for a long time aroused the anger of the people of Central Asia, who became particularly restive in the autumn of 1917 when it was discovered that there was practically no bread, cloth or any other items of prime necessity in stock anywhere in Central Asia. On September 11, representatives of the democratic organisations of the Turkestan Territory met in Tashkent. The Bolsheviks proposed that the meeting be declared a revolutionary committee and full power granted it, but the conciliators opposed this. On the same day, members of the Territory Bureau of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) addressed a meeting of the Tashkent Soviet E.C., which then, having first broken the resistance of the Right S.R.s adopted the Bolsheviks' proposal to form a revolutionary committee, and also decided to hold a demonstration on the next day (September 12) under the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!"

This action of the Russian workers and soldiers, backed by the na-

<sup>1</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 6, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 47; *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia in September 1917. The General National Crisis*, pp. 143, 144 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Tiflis, September 8, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Front* (The Front), Minsk, September 10, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Nasha Gazeta* (Our Newspaper), Tashkent, September 13, 1917.

<sup>1</sup> *Vestnik Uremennogo Pravitelstva*, September 5, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 370.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 26, p. 66.

tive population of Uzbekistan, produced a severe reaction from local officials of the Provisional Government. The Military Commander of the Turkestan Military District, General Cherkes, arrested all the members of the revolutionary committee and imprisoned them in Tashkent Fortress. This provocative behaviour of the authorities only made the situation yet more tense. The workers and soldiers demanded new elections to the E.C. of the Tashkent Soviet (which was mainly a conciliatory one) and a new E.C. consisting of 7 Bolsheviks, 18 Left-wing S.R.s and 10 Menshevik-Internationalists<sup>1</sup> was elected, and this was able to secure the release of the revolutionary committee. The new E.C. then appealed to the country for support.

Pending the convening of a second territorial congress of Soviets the revolutionary committee and the E.C. of the Tashkent Soviet planned to set up a provisional territorial Soviet. Meanwhile they began to implement their declared programme. General Cherkes was removed and replaced by Ensign Perfilyev, and his Chief of Staff and the City Commandant were replaced and the head of the military cadet school arrested. A commissar was appointed to supervise the Tashkent railway station, guards put on the Treasury, and a cable that had been sent by the Provisional Government representative calling Cossack troops into the city cancelled.<sup>2</sup>

The working people of Central Asia were very much elated by the news that the E.C. of the Soviet and the revolutionary committee had taken power. Telegrams of greetings and support poured in from the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of Verny (Alma-Ata), Katta-Kurgan and many other towns.<sup>3</sup> The reaction of the Provisional Government to "the Tashkent events" was somewhat different. Kerensky sent a telegram to V. P. Nalivkin, chairman of the Turkestan Committee (the local organ of the Provisional Government) in which he regarded the legal actions of the revolutionary bodies as "counter-revolutionary", "criminal" and so on, and informed Nalivkin that troops with machine-guns and artillery were being sent to Tashkent as fast as possible.<sup>4</sup> A punitive expedition led by General Korovichenko arrived on September 24 and seized the Tashkent Soviet building, its cash box and papers and arrested some of the members of the Executive Committee.

<sup>1</sup> S. Muravitsky (V. Lopukhov), "The September Events in Tashkent in 1917" in *The Proletarian Revolution*, No. 10 (33), 1924, pp. 147, 149 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Preparations for and the Carrying Through of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Uzbekistan*, pp. 123, 124 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Kazakhstan*, pp. 136, 138; *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Chronicle of Events*, Vol. III, p. 30 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Rech*, September 16, 1917.

The excesses and the violence of the "legal authorities" led to the calling of a general city strike. Factories stopped work, trams halted, and the power supply was cut. Realising their helplessness, the local organs of the Provisional Government revoked the martial law they had imposed, and the workers, having won the battle, ended their strike on September 28.

The whole of Central Asia was aroused by the September events in Tashkent. The Merv, Kushka, Chardjou and Krasnovodsk Soviets demanded the ending of the repressions and declared that they had no confidence in Kerensky's government.<sup>1</sup> A revolutionary committee was formed in Ashkhabad and this held power for a few days.<sup>2</sup> The Turkestan regional administration informed the Provisional Government in a state of panic that "the whole of the Kirghiz steppe is about to be engulfed in a general uprising".<sup>3</sup>

During these difficult days of counter-revolutionary orgy the workers and soldiers of Tashkent appealed for help to Petrograd. A. Y. Pershin, a Bolshevik Member of the E.C. of the Tashkent Soviet, was sent to the capital and the Petrograd Soviet announced its solidarity with the Tashkent working people and its "full readiness to support the just demands of revolutionary democracy in Tashkent".<sup>4</sup>

In early October, the Provisional Government launched an attack on the Kaluga Soviet. The Commander of the Minsk Military District had appealed to the Commander of the Western Front General Baluyev for "reliable troops" to be sent to Kaluga as the local garrison had fallen entirely under the influence of the Bolsheviks and was refusing to obey any orders except those of the Kaluga Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. Cossacks were quickly dispatched to the town along with the 17th Nizhegorodsky Dragoon Regiment and three armoured cars. The Headquarters of the Minsk Military District gave orders for the Kaluga Soviet to be dissolved and the garrison sent to the front.<sup>5</sup> Martial law was imposed and the Provisional Government commissar endorsed the order for the dissolution of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D. M. Rudnitskaya, *From the History of the Building of the Soviets in Turkestan*, pp. 49-50 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> O. Kuliyev, *Turkmenistan in the Period of Preparing for and Carrying Through the October Socialist Revolution*, Ashkhabad, 1953, pp. 43, 44 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> D. Polyakov, L. Fursova, *The Party and the National Reserves in the October Revolution*, Moscow, 1958, p. 66 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, the G.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 5, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *The Establishment of Soviet Power in the Kaluga Gubernia*, pp. 164, 170, 432, 440 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 440.

The revolutionary Kaluga garrison was now forced to take urgent measures to defend itself. An emergency meeting of the E.C. of the Soviet with regimental committees decided to establish a revolutionary headquarters, to arm reserve infantry regiments and to protect the Soviet's premises. The situation in the town became more and more menacing as further Cossack troops arrived. A full meeting of the Kaluga Soviet demanded that the counter-revolutionary troops withdraw and the repressions stop. The gubernia commissar of the Provisional Government then presented the Kaluga Soviet with an ultimatum to disarm and disperse its soldiers' section immediately and send all garrison units to the front. Without waiting for the term of the ultimatum to expire, Cossacks and Dragoons armed with machine-guns and armoured cars surrounded the Soviet building, opened fire on it, and then broke into it and arrested the Bolshevik members of the E.C.<sup>1</sup>

Kerensky treated this "trial of strength" with the Kaluga Soviet as but the opening shot in his campaign to destroy all the Bolshevik Soviets of the Central Industrial Area. He had already drawn up plans for sending punitive expeditions to 12 gubernias.<sup>2</sup>

The Soviets of the entire Central Industrial Area reacted sharply to the events in Kaluga. The S.R. and Menshevik Moscow Regional Bureau of the Soviets did no more than discuss the situation in Kaluga and gave the Kaluga Soviet no positive help, but the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, the district Soviets of Moscow, the Bryansk and Tula Soviets and the Soviets of other towns of the Moscow Region took steps to assist Kaluga. The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies dispatched a delegation with broad powers to Kaluga, and sent Bolshevik deputy G. I. Lomov to inform the Petrograd Soviet of its action and to persuade it to prevent the sending of punitive troops to Kaluga.<sup>3</sup>

The Soviets of Tula, Orel and Bryansk also took emergency measures to halt the advance of the counter-revolution. Representatives of the E.C. of the Kaluga Soviet and the Kaluga garrison attended a meeting of the Tula Soviet on October 20 and told those present that the commander of the punitive expedition in Kaluga was under instructions to move on to Tula and other towns. The Tula Soviet decided to form a revolutionary committee, to protect the factories, to determine the strength of the local garrison and to find supplies of arms for it. The Soviet of Deputies of the Tula Junc-

tion was given the task of keeping a watch on the movement of troops.<sup>4</sup>

The revolutionary committee formed in Bryansk took control of the arsenal, prepared the garrison for combat and planned the defence of the town. On the demand of the commander of the Kaluga garrison an army unit was sent to Kaluga from Bryansk (without the knowledge of either the Soviet or the revolutionary committee), but the soldiers soon returned, saying that they did not want to be "throttlers of the revolution".<sup>5</sup>

The Orel Soviet still remained in S.R. and Menshevik hands, but now threatened by a counter-revolutionary attack it acted decisively. A closed meeting of the Soviet on October 21 attended by representatives of factory, company and regimental committees stated that it had concentrated all power into its hands and instructed the Orel garrison to obey the E.C. of the Soviet unconditionally.<sup>6</sup>

The workers' and soldiers' resolute actions successfully frustrated the plans of the counter-revolutionary forces. But Kornilov's supporters were quick to hatch another plot. A second conference of "public figures" chaired by Rodzyanko was called in Moscow on October 12. The Cadet Party called a congress for the same time. Both centres of counter-revolution demanded that the country continue the war side by side with the Allies until victory had been achieved, that "the fighting strength of the Army be restored", "firm order" enforced, martial law proclaimed in all areas where mass anti-Government actions were taking place, the Soviets and committees and other democratic bodies dissolved, and "radical reforms" in the social and economic fields dropped.<sup>7</sup>

Kerensky tried to engineer a "second Kornilov affair" with the active assistance of the imperialists of the Allied powers. The British Ambassador J. Buchanan has written in his memoirs that immediately after the defeat of the Kornilov revolt he wrote together with the Ambassadors of France, Italy and the U.S.A. a joint Note to the Provisional Government which was to determine its subsequent military and home policies.<sup>8</sup> The Ambassadors hinted to Kerensky that if he refused to fulfil the demands they presented their governments would cease to send supplies to the Army or provide further credits.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683; *October in Tula*, pp. 248-50 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683; S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 1000.

<sup>3</sup> A. A. Komarov and K. A. Sokut, *The Orel Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in 1917*, pp. 108, 109 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Rech*, October 15 and 17, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> J. Buchanan, *Memoirs of a Diplomat*, p. 258 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>1</sup> *The Establishment of Soviet Power in the Kaluga Gubernia*, pp. 162, 164, 440.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 683.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 1000.

The increasing gravity of the domestic political situation and the strong interference of foreign imperialism in all spheres of public life indicated that Russia was on the brink of a national catastrophe. Only the overthrow of the Provisional Government, which had by now so badly compromised itself, and the transfer of full power to the Soviets could guarantee the country's survival. An armed uprising was thus placed on the order of the day.

Summing up the work of the Bolshevik Party from its foundation in the fields both of theory and practice, Lenin wrote: "All the experience of both revolutions, that of 1905 and that of 1917, and all the decisions of the Bolshevik Party, all its political declarations for many years, may be reduced to the concept that the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies is a reality only as an organ of insurrection, as an organ of revolutionary power."<sup>1</sup>

The decisions of regional, gubernia, district and other congresses and conferences of Soviets held in September and October 1917<sup>2</sup> were permeated with Lenin's concept of the Soviets as organs of insurrection and as the political form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Second Congress of Delegates of the Baltic Fleet, representing about 60,000 sailors, was held under the guidance of prominent Bolsheviks in Helsingfors on board the yacht *Polyarnaya Zvezda* (Polar Star) from September 25 to October 5. P. Y. Dybenko chaired the congress and V. A. Antonov-Ovseyenko, N. A. Khovrin, A. V. Baranov and A. M. Afanasiev-Nevsky were active participants in it. This congress, which passed mainly Bolshevik resolutions on all points of policy, was an important one in that it was instrumental in mobilising one of the shock detachments of the revolution. The Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet broke with the policy of conciliation and cleansed itself of Menshevik defencists and Right-wing S.R.s. Bolshevik delegates P. Dybenko, N. Khovrin, I. Vakhrameyev, A. Zheleznyakov, V. Myasnikov, A. Baranov, F. Olich and others were elected to the congress of Soviets of the Northern Region and to the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

So by now the workers and soldiers of Petrograd and the sailors of the Baltic Fleet were ready to go into action on the first call of the Bolshevik Party. But it remained to ensure that the armed uprising

would be supported by the Soviets of all the towns situated close to the capital—especially as the suburbs of Petrograd and all the uyezds of the Petrograd Gubernia were chockfull of cavalry troops and military cadet schools. On the initiative of the Petrograd District R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Committee, the First Petrograd Gubernia Conference of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was convened in Kronstadt on October 5. The Bolsheviks of Petrograd and Kronstadt regarded this conference as being of the first importance and prominent Party workers P. V. Dashkevich, S. A. Lozovsky, and I. P. Flerovsky took part in it. The conference elected a district executive committee of Soviets with I. P. Flerovsky as chairman, L. N. Stal—a leading worker of the Kronstadt R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Committee—as deputy chairman, and Y. Flaxerman, also a Bolshevik, as secretary.

By the autumn of 1917, power had in reality already passed to local Soviets in many parts of the Petrograd Gubernia and in Estonia, Latvia and Finland—but the actions of the Soviets were not co-ordinated. For this reason the idea of holding a congress of the Soviets of the Northern Region was advanced by the Regional Committee of the Army, the Navy and the Workers of Finland (in agreement with the Revel Soviet).

The Petersburg and Central Committees of the Bolshevik Party and Lenin himself treated the convocation of the Congress of the Soviets of the North as a most important step. Delegates to the Third (October) Petrograd City R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Conference declared in their speeches that "the regional congress required very serious attention, especially in view of the present situation".<sup>1</sup> The C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) repeatedly discussed the time, the place and the participants for the Northern congress.<sup>2</sup> And just before the congress opened Lenin addressed a special letter to the Bolshevik delegates to it.<sup>3</sup> The Petrograd Soviet also took a very active part in the preparations for and the work of the congress. L. M. Karakhan reported to a plenum of the Soviet on October 8 that the E.C. had decided to participate in it and a 30-strong delegation was elected: 15 Bolsheviks, 10 S.R.s and 5 Mensheviks.<sup>4</sup> The delegates from Moscow were elected at a joint meeting of the executive committees of the City

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> There were 16 regional congresses of Soviets, involving over 500 gubernia and uyezd Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. See *Lenin's Party—the Organiser of the October Revolution*, Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1965, p. 253 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> *The Second and Third Petrograd All-City Bolshevik Conferences in July and October, 1917*, p. 108 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, pp. 73, 75, 86 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 182-87.

<sup>4</sup> B. A. Breslav, *The Eve of October 1917. The Congress of the Soviets of the Northern Region, October 11-13, 1917*, p. 15 (Russ. ed.).

Soviets. Three Bolsheviks G. I. Lomov, V. A. Avanesov and Y. N. Ignatov, one Menshevik and one S.R. were mandated to attend.<sup>1</sup>

More than 20 cities sent representatives to the Northern congress—Petrograd, Moscow, Archangel, Revel, Helsingfors, Kronstadt, Vyborg, Narva, Gatchina and Tsarskoye Syelo among them. In addition there were delegates from the Second Congress of Sailors of the Baltic Fleet, the Petrograd Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and the Petrograd District Soviet, and from the soldiers' organisations of the Northern, Western, South-Western and Rumanian fronts. It was thus a forum representing the will of many millions of workers, soldiers and peasants.

The delegates consisted of 51 Bolsheviks, 24 Left S.R.s, 10 Right S.R.s, four defencist Mensheviks and one Menshevik-Internationalist.<sup>2</sup> The Bolshevik faction was therefore the most numerous. And as the secretary of the congress B. A. Breslav—a member of the Petrograd Gubernia R.S.D.L.P. (B.) Committee—has testified, over 90 per cent of the participants in it stood for the immediate transfer of state power to the Soviets.<sup>3</sup>

The S.R. and Menshevik-dominated C.E.C. of the Soviets was sharply hostile to the congress of the Soviets of the Northern Region. The C.E.C. Bureau stated on October 11: "The meeting of delegates to be called is not a mandated regional congress of the Northern areas but a private meeting of certain individual Soviets."<sup>4</sup> But the conciliators' attempts to frustrate the congress or at least to diminish its significance failed. The delegates of the Petrograd Soviet and of the Regional Committee of the Soviets of Finland exposed the plans of the Mensheviks and the Right-wing S.R.s and on a proposal of the Bolshevik faction the congress passed a resolution at the outset of its proceedings stating: "On the assumption that those present at the congress represent the Soviets and not the parties, we suggest that people who are not going to participate in its work should inform the Bureau of this fact—also telling it from which Soviets they have come—so that it will be possible to ascertain whether their Soviets approve of the attitude taken by their delegates."<sup>5</sup>

Lenin's letter to the Bolshevik participants in the Northern congress called for a profound analysis of the conditions that prevailed at that particular time so that it should be understood by everyone that the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!" could mean only a call to

<sup>1</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 66.

<sup>2</sup> B. A. Breslav, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *Rabochaya Gazeta*, October 12, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Rabochy Put*, October 13, 1917.

insurrection. Lenin wrote at the close of his letter: "It is not a question of voting, of attracting the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, of additional provincial Soviets, or of a congress of these Soviets. It is a question of insurrection, which can and must be decided by Petrograd, Moscow, Helsingfors, Kronstadt, Vyborg and Revel. It is *in the vicinity of Petrograd* and in Petrograd itself that the insurrection can, and must be decided on and effected, as earnestly as possible, with as much preparation as possible, as quickly as possible and as energetically as possible."<sup>1</sup>

The speeches of the delegates at the congress fully confirmed that Lenin's conclusions were correct: the Provisional Government had completely discredited itself and the masses were ready to rise in arms against it. The delegate of the Regional Committee of the Soviets of Finland V. A. Antonov-Ovseyenko reported that it was becoming more and more difficult to restrain the soldiers and the sailors from taking action. "The question of power has become a crucial issue," he said.<sup>2</sup> And the delegate of the Latvian Riflemen (Northern Front) declared: "The Latvian Soviets have advanced the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets!' from the very start, and now that revolutionary Petrograd is going to put it into practice, they are ready to render it their full support. Be resolute! Let there be no hesitation!" The representative of the 33rd Army Corps (8th Army, Rumanian Front) read a message from the soldiers demanding the immediate transfer of power to the Soviets and the signing of a just, democratic peace.<sup>3</sup> The leader of the sailors of the Baltic Fleet P. Y. Dybenko, the delegates of the Petrograd District Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and those of the Petrograd Soviet of Peasants' Deputies expressed the same ideas: the nation was tired of waiting and the demands of the revolutionary masses all boiled down to but one demand—that power must go to the Soviets.

The Petrograd proletariat fully shared these opinions of the delegates. On October 12th the following resolution was passed by representatives of one of the capital's largest working-class districts: "The Kolomenskoye District Soviet considers the immediate transfer of power to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies an urgent matter and regards any delay as the worst crime against the revolution. It therefore proposes that the Congress of Soviets of the Northern Region put this slogan into practice."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> B. A. Breslav, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> *The Petrograd District Soviets in 1917*, Vol. I, p. 356 (Russ. ed.).

The congress of the Northern Region viewed all the current problems (the country's military and political situation and the question of the convening of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets) in the light of Lenin's directives and of the October 10 decision of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) on the armed uprising. N. V. Krylenko, who chaired the congress, developed in his speeches Lenin's point that the immediate transfer of all power to the Soviets was a matter of urgent necessity. "There can be no delay in this matter [preparing for an uprising.—A. A.]," he said. "We must frankly and clearly tell the people to get ready for the transfer of power at once." A member of the Bolshevik faction of the Petrograd Soviet, M. M. Lashevich, and the delegate of the Revel Soviet, I. V. Rabchinsky (also a Bolshevik) proposed the setting up of military-revolutionary committees in all the towns of the Northern Region, and this measure was approved.<sup>1</sup> A Northern Regional Committee was elected at the closing session of the congress, consisting of 11 Bolsheviks and 6 Left S.R.s.<sup>2</sup>

Two regional congresses were held simultaneously in Moscow on September 30—the Second Moscow Regional Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and the First Congress of Peasants' Deputies. It was in fact a joint congress of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies of the Moscow Region since important political questions were discussed at the joint plenary sessions. According to figures given by Z. L. Serebryakova, 192 of the 230 delegates to the Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies who gave their party allegiance included 122 Bolsheviks, 49 S.R.s and 21 Mensheviks and representatives of other petty-bourgeois parties.<sup>3</sup> Data discovered by G. A. Trukan indicates the rapid rate at which the Soviets of the Central Industrial Area were Bolshevikised on the eve of the October Revolution. The Bolsheviks united not more than a third of the delegates to the First Moscow Regional Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies held in May, while at the Second Congress Bolsheviks made up more than half of all delegates.<sup>4</sup>

In fact the influence of the Bolsheviks grew in the leading organs of all regional and territorial associations of Soviets. The party composition of the delegates to the Second Regional Conference of

Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Donets-Krivoi Rog Basin held in Kharkov from October 6 to 12 differed greatly from that of the first conference held in late April-early May. The petty-bourgeois bloc secured key positions on the E.C. of the Regional Soviet of the Donbas and Krivoi Rog areas at the first conference, but now many local Soviets had elected Bolsheviks to represent them at the second regional conference—more than 30 per cent of all delegates.<sup>1</sup>

From September 30 to October 10 the Second Extraordinary Congress of Soviets of the Turkestan Territory took place in Tashkent. Both the participants in it and the character of its decisions were very different from those of the First Congress of Turkestan Soviets (April 7-15), which had supported the Provisional Government and voted for the continuation of the imperialist war. Needless to say, the Territorial Soviet elected by the first congress consisted of Right-wing S.R.s and defencist Mensheviks. But at the second congress it was the Tashkent delegation, consisting of 10 Bolsheviks led by I. Tobolin, who called the tune. The Mensheviks and S.R.s attempted to persuade the congress to condemn "the September events" in Tashkent but failed. Instead the delegates unanimously supported a statement of the Bolshevik P. G. Poltoratsky that "those cannot be the judges of democracy who are its executors". The congress also condemned the conciliatory line of the Territorial Soviet and its chairman, the Right S.R. Fiterman. The S.R. and Menshevik Territorial Soviet then resigned and a new Soviet was formed from representatives of all Turkestan Soviets.<sup>2</sup>

Bolshevik resolutions on the transfer of all power to the Soviets were also passed in October by the Third Regional Congress of Soviets of the Volga Area, the Conference of Soviets of the Western Region, the Second Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Sailors' and Poor Peasants' Deputies of Estonia, the First All-Siberia Congress of Soviets, and by many other congresses and conferences.

The gubernia and district congresses of the Soviets presented a convincing picture of mass unity around the Bolshevik slogan "All power to the Soviets!". Representatives of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Lugansk District unanimously carried a resolution at their conference on October 16 demanding that all power be given to the Soviets, that workers' control of production be estab-

<sup>1</sup> B. A. Breslav, op. cit., pp. 44, 45, 55, 62, 63, 64 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Rabochy Put*, October 20, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Soviets and the Alliance of the Working Class and the Peasantry in the October Revolution*, p. 72 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> G. A. Trukan, "The Bolshevikising of the Soviets of the Central Industrial Area on the Eve of October" in *October and the Civil War in the U.S.S.R.*, Collection of Articles, pp. 102, 103 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Kharkov, October 7, 11, 13 and 17, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> K. Y. Zhitov, "The Victory of the October Socialist Revolution in Turkestan" in *Historical Notes*, Vol. 61, pp. 195 and 207; D. M. Rudnitskaya, op. cit., pp. 52, 53, 55 (Russ. ed.).

lished, and that all Cossack and other counter-revolutionary detachments be withdrawn from the Donbas immediately.<sup>1</sup>

The Congress of Soviets of the Vladimir Gubernia decided "(a) to declare the Provisional Government and all parties that support it traitors to the revolution and to the people; and (b) to regard all the Soviets of the Vladimir Gubernia and their Gubernia Executive Committee as being in a state of merciless and open war on the Provisional Government". Local Soviets throughout the gubernia were advised "to act with courage and independence in accordance with the interests of the labouring masses".<sup>2</sup> The militant revolutionary programme of action worked out by the Bolsheviks and approved by the Vladimir Gubernia Congress was well received throughout the area and the Soviets of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Alexandrov, Gus-Khrustalny, Kovrov and other towns declared their determination to fight the organs of the Provisional Government.

The Soviets went over to the Bolsheviks on the eve of the October Revolution in the rural areas as well as in the big industrial centres. A Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Ryazan Gubernia was held on October 14-16. The Soviets of Ryazan, Zaraisk, Skopino, Yegorievsk and Spassk were represented at it and the delegates included 28 Bolsheviks, 10 Left S.R.s, 8 Mensheviks and 3 Internationalists, most of whom spoke in favour of the transfer of full power to the Soviets in both the centre and throughout the country.<sup>3</sup>

In Sarapul (Vyatka Gubernia) a conference of the Soviets of the South-Kama District was convened from October 17 to 21. Delegates from the Soviets of Izhevsk, Yelabuga, Sarapul and other towns attended. The Bolshevik resolutions on all the items on the agenda were passed after a fierce struggle with the Right S.R.s and Mensheviks. The resolution on the current situation stated that the Pre-parliament which had been formed to bypass the revolutionary Soviets was "a smokescreen to cover the sell-out to the bourgeoisie". The conference spoke out against the Provisional Government and came out for the speedy convening of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets and for the settling of the issue of state power in the interests of the workers and peasants.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Struggle for Soviet Power in the Donbas*, Collection of Documents and Materials, Stalino, 1957, pp. 153, 154 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, October 18, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Struggle to Establish and Consolidate Soviet Power in the Ryazan Gubernia*, pp. 110-15, 391-92 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The October Socialist Revolution in Udmurtia*, Collection of Documents, Izhevsk, 1957, pp. 12, 13, 155, 156, 339-47 (Russ. ed.).

A study of the party composition and of the resolutions of the regional, gubernia and uyezd congresses of Soviets held in October reveals the extent of the growth of Bolshevik influence and explains why Lenin was able to say: "... we knew with certainty, from the experience of the mass elections to the Soviets, that the overwhelming majority of the workers and soldiers had already come over to our side in September and in early October."<sup>1</sup>

The firm opposition of the Bolshevik Soviets and revolutionary committees to the Provisional Government's efforts to liquidate the strongholds of the revolution led the counter-revolutionary forces to take desperate measures. It became known in early October that the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was demanding the withdrawal from Petrograd of no less than two-thirds of the garrison—because, it was alleged, the Germans had broken through the country's defence lines and the capital was in danger.

The dismemberment of the Petrograd garrison was an important part of Kerensky & Co.'s general plans. The Provisional Government also discussed at a "private meeting" on October 5 the removal of all Government offices from Petrograd to Moscow and the evacuation of a large number of the bigger factories of Petrograd and Revel (without their workers!) to the South, closer to Kaledin. Lenin wrote in his "Letter to the Petrograd City Conference" on October 7, exposing the purpose of these bourgeois provocations: "The aggressive operations of the German fleet, accompanied by the very strange inactivity of the British fleet and coupled with the Provisional Government's plan to move from Petrograd to Moscow, arouse a very strong suspicion that the government of Kerensky (or, what is the same thing, the Russian imperialists behind him) have entered into a conspiracy with the Anglo-French imperialists to surrender Petrograd to the Germans and in this way to suppress the revolution."<sup>2</sup>

The Government's counter-revolutionary idea of running away to Moscow and giving Petrograd up to the enemy infuriated the workers, soldiers and sailors of the city. The soldiers' section of the Soviet protested angrily against the moving of the Government.<sup>3</sup> This stand of the soldiers' section was of decisive importance in the final transition of the whole of the Petrograd garrison to the side of the revolution. Lenin observed that "the soldiers are also becoming more convinced of Kerensky's conspiracy. We must gather all forces to

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 26, p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 7, 1917.

support this *correct* conviction and to carry on propaganda among the soldiers".<sup>1</sup>

The questions of the withdrawal of the troops and of the organisation of Petrograd's defence came under discussion on the afternoon of October 9 in the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet. The Bolshevik faction moved a resolution stating that the Soviet should not take responsibility for the Provisional Government's criminal actions, that no more revolutionary troops should be sent away from the capital to the front, and that a Revolutionary Defence Headquarters should be set up. The Mensheviks and Right S.R.s stubbornly resisted this resolution by claiming that the creation of a separate Soviet body alongside the Petrograd Military District Headquarters would be "detrimental" to the defence of the capital as it would lead to the "re-emergence" of dual power, and they succeeded in carrying by a majority of one (13 Mensheviks and S.R.s against 12 Bolsheviks) a resolution approving the withdrawal of the troops from Petrograd. And instead of a Revolutionary Headquarters the Mensheviks and S.R.s agreed to set up "a collegium" under the Commander of the Petrograd Military District consisting of representatives of the C.E.C., the Petrograd Soviet and Centrobalt.<sup>2</sup> In other words they suggested that the capital's defence should be entrusted to those who were preparing to give it up to the Germans.

On the evening of October 9 a plenary meeting of the Petrograd Soviet, attended by more than 1,000 people, was held, at which the same crucial issue of the withdrawal of the troops was again discussed. It was evident that the E.C. decision requiring the garrison troops "to prepare to leave Petrograd if necessary in order to defend the approaches to the city" was not popular, and the meeting rejected it by an overwhelming majority. Instead the resolution of the Bolshevik faction was carried, stating that "the salvation of both Petrograd and the nation lies in the transfer of power to the Soviets".<sup>3</sup> The meeting also obliged the Executive Committee to set up a Revolutionary Defence Committee in co-operation with the soldiers' section and representatives of the garrison, to collect all possible information relating to the defence of Petrograd and its approaches, to take steps to arm the workers and in this way "to guarantee Petrograd's revolutionary defence and the safety of the nation from the openly prepared attack of Kornilov's military and civilian plotters".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> *Golos Soldata* (Soldier's Voice), Petrograd, October 10, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Rabochy Put*, October 10, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Therefore the Revolutionary Defence Committee that was to be set up after the Petrograd Soviet's decision of October 9 was designed as a headquarters of *defence*—and not as the headquarters of the armed uprising. This should be borne in mind since Trotsky did his utmost (shortly after the victory of the October Revolution) to spread the idea that he had "anticipated" the historic October 10 decision of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P. (B.) to prepare for an armed uprising and to organise its headquarters. In fact, of course, the idea of setting up the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet (a very different body from the Defence Committee) was Lenin's. In September, when an armed uprising against Kerensky's counter-revolutionary government had become the pressing task of the day, Lenin recommended the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Central Committee to "organise a *headquarters* of the insurgent detachments, move *our* insurrection headquarters to the central telephone exchange and connect it by telephone with all the factories, all the regiments, all the points of armed fighting, etc".<sup>1</sup>

In the second half of September and the early part of October, when the home and foreign situation demanded that the Bolshevik Party find an immediate practical solution to the question of the armed uprising, Lenin came to Petrograd illegally on October 7 and stayed in the Vyborg District.<sup>2</sup> The Bolsheviks were holding their Third Petrograd All-City Conference at the time. Lenin worked out "Theses" for the participants and addressed a letter to them to be read at a closed session. With all his revolutionary passion, Lenin convinced the Party of the need to prepare for an armed uprising with the utmost energy. "We must admit that unless the Kerensky government is overthrown by the proletariat and the soldiers in the near future the revolution is ruined. The question of an uprising is on the order of the day."<sup>3</sup>

The Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) met on October 10 with Lenin presiding for the first time since July. He demonstrated in his report on the current situation that the question of the armed uprising was absolutely crucial and that the decisive moment was near at hand. The political atmosphere for the Soviets to take power had fully matured and attention should now be concentrated on the military-technical side of the question (organising a headquarters, arming the workers, forming Red Guards, etc.). The C.C. passed the

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Lenin in 1917. Dates of the Life and Work*, p. 101 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 145.

resolution proposed by Lenin by 10 votes to two (Kamenev and Zinoviev).<sup>1</sup>

The October 10 decisions of the Bolshevik Central Committee and of the Petrograd All-City Party Conference on the armed uprising laid the basis for the creation of the Revolutionary Military Committee. The organising was done under Lenin's leadership by V. A. Antonov-Ovseyenko, P. Y. Dybenko, N. I. Podvoisky, V. I. Nevsky, A. D. Sadovsky, K. A. Mekhonoshin and other Bolsheviks.

On October 12 the E.C. of the Petrograd Soviet held a closed meeting at which the Bolsheviks put the proposal to form the Revolutionary Military Committee. The meeting endorsed the proposal, only two Mensheviks dissenting, and established the statutes of this body. The immediate tasks of the Revolutionary Military Committee were to determine what military forces and facilities were required for Petrograd's defence and should not be withdrawn from the city, to work out a plan for its defence, to get in touch with Centrobalt, the Regional Committee of the Army, the Navy and the Workers of Finland and with the Soviets and revolutionary committees of the suburbs of Petrograd, and, finally, to maintain order and to preserve discipline in the garrison.<sup>2</sup>

The Revolutionary Military Committee was formed in an atmosphere of intense struggle between the Bolsheviks and the Right-wing S.R.s and Mensheviks. A meeting of the soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet on October 13 heard a report by the Left-wing S.R. P. Y. Lazimir on the statutes of the R.M.C., which laid down its structure and functions. The Bolsheviks suggested that the draft statutes be approved without a debate since they had already been approved by the E.C. of the Soviet. The Mensheviks in turn proposed that the meeting should refuse to discuss the statutes at all. The Chairman, A. D. Sadovsky, put both proposals to the vote. 283 supported the Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.s, one voted against and 23 abstained.<sup>3</sup>

The struggle around the formation of the Revolutionary Military Committee continued at a full meeting of the Petrograd Soviet on October 16. The S.R.s (mainly from the Right and Centre) refused to discuss the statutes of the R.M.C.<sup>4</sup> and the Mensheviks subjected the Bolsheviks' proposals to malicious criticism. Speaking on his faction's behalf, M. Broido went so far as to declare that the agita-

<sup>1</sup> *The Minutes of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, p. 86 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Rabochy Put*, October 18, 1917; *The History of the Civil War in the USSR*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1947, p. 169 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 14, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 274.

tion for the transfer of full power to the Soviets was "most dangerous".<sup>1</sup> But the Mensheviks and Right S.R.s did not succeed in preventing the formation of the Revolutionary Military Committee. The Petrograd Soviet approved the statutes of the R.M.C. by an overwhelming majority (only three or four voted against). Left S.R. representatives were included on the Revolutionary Military Committee alongside Bolsheviks.<sup>2</sup>

On October 16 the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P. (B.) met again. Lenin declared at this meeting that "the position was clear—either Kornilov's dictatorship or the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorer strata of the peasantry". He concluded by saying that "from a political analysis of the class struggle in Russia and in Europe there emerged the necessity to pursue the most determined and most active policy, which could be only the armed uprising".<sup>3</sup>

Kamenev and Zinoviev again spoke and voted against the decision of the C.C. on the armed uprising. A resolution confirming the C.C. decision of October 10 was passed by 19 votes to two with four abstentions. The Central Committee now called on all Party organisations and all workers and soldiers "to make the most active and comprehensive preparations for the armed uprising".<sup>4</sup>

On the same night the Party Centre of the Revolutionary Military Committee was elected, consisting of Sverdlov, Stalin, Bubnov, Uritsky and Dzerzhinsky. The major task of the Party Centre was to ensure the consistent and firm implementation of the Bolshevik Party line in all the work of the Revolutionary Military Committee.

The Kerensky government still hoped that in conjunction with the S.R. and Menshevik C.E.C., the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and the conciliators' army committees it would be able to withdraw the revolutionary troops from Petrograd. This was the subject of a meeting held at the Headquarters of the Northern Front (Pskov) on October 17. The Commander-in-Chief of the Front, General Cheremisov, and the Provisional Government Commissar Voitinsky tried to convince those present that it was necessary to withdraw the Petrograd garrison for "strategic reasons".

Nearly all the commanders of the various armies of the Northern Front spoke along the same lines. During a break in the meeting, representatives of army organisations exchanged views with the delegation of the Petrograd Soviet and garrison. Towards the close

<sup>1</sup> *Golos Soldata*, October 18, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in the October Revolution*, pp. 343, 344.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 191-92.

<sup>4</sup> *The C.P.S.U. in Resolutions*, Part 1, p. 399 (Russ. ed.).

of the meeting the Bolsheviks read a declaration written by Y. M. Sverdlov stating that the question of the withdrawal of the troops must be transferred for final solution to the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>1</sup> The Bolshevik-led Petrograd Soviet refused to obey Kerensky's orders and in this way yet another of the Provisional Government's provocative schemes on the eve of the October Revolution was scotched.

Lenin's letters of September and October and the Bolshevik Central Committee decisions of October 10 and 16 galvanised every Bolshevik organisation and Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies into making the necessary preparations for the insurrection. Revolutionary military committees, headquarters of insurgent troops and other militant Soviet bodies were formed everywhere—at Tsarskoye Syelo, Gatchina, Sestroretsk, Yamburg, Narva and other places. The XV Emergency Conference of the Social-Democrats of Latvia was called at Valka on October 16. V. A. Antonov-Ovseyenko, representing the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), acquainted the Latvian Bolsheviks with the C.C. decision on the armed uprising and with Lenin's directives. The conference decided to set up a Revolutionary Military Committee within the area of disposition of the 12th Army.<sup>2</sup> On October 22 the Estonian Revolutionary Committee, led by I. V. Rabchinsky and V. E. Kingissepp, was formed in Revel.<sup>3</sup>

In Moscow, the Regional Bolshevik Bureau met in closed session after the decision of the Party Central Committee on the armed uprising and resolved to set up a fighting Party centre for co-ordinating the preparations for the uprising in the Moscow Region. The centre was formed of five representatives—two from the Regional Bureau, two from the Moscow City Committee and one from the Moscow District Party Committee. Members of the Moscow Regional Bureau and other leading Party workers were dispatched to gubernia and other towns with instructions to inform local Bolshevik organisations of the Central Committee's directives and to give them practical help in setting up revolutionary committees—and also to gather intelligence of a military-technical nature.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time as the revolutionary military committees were formed in Petrograd, Moscow and gubernia and other towns, work

was going on to organise the Red Guards and to arm and give military training to the workers. This was done on the initiative of the district Soviets and of the workers themselves, despite the resistance of the C.E.C. On September 14 the plenum of the Kolomenskoye District Soviet noted that the C.E.C. commission dealing with the arming of the workers<sup>1</sup> had promised 7,000 rifles but in fact no more than 3,000 had been handed out.<sup>2</sup> And on October 18 (only a week before the uprising) the military department of the C.E.C. declared that it did not consider it "in the least possible to deal with the distribution of arms as the Central Executive Committee has not discussed the formation of workers' guards".<sup>3</sup> The actions of the Menshevik and Right S.R. leaders of the C.E.C. fully met the requirements of the Provisional Government. The Home Minister A. M. Nikitin had spoken in September of the need "to keep a tireless watch on the Red Guards that are being organised and to prepare, in consultation with the Commander-in-Chief, to disarm them".<sup>4</sup> But these plans of the counter-revolution were bound to fail. The Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet worked in constant touch with regimental and other soldiers' committees, the revolutionary headquarters and with the newly formed commandants' offices attached to the Vyborg, Narva, First Gorodskoy, Kolomenskoye and other district Soviets.

On October 22 the First Petrograd All-City Conference of Red Guards was called by the department of workers' guards of the Petrograd Soviet. The leaders of the conference were Sverdlov and Dzerzhinsky. More than 100 people were present representing the Central Headquarters of the Red Guards, the R.S.D.L.P. (B.)'s Army Organisation, the trade unions, the factory committees and the suburbs of Sestroretsk, Shlisselburg, Obukhov and Kolpino. The speakers said that the Red Guards were growing in strength and number and were fully prepared to fight for Soviet power at any moment. The conference discussed and adopted the statutes of the workers' Red Guards of Petrograd. All Red Guards were put at the disposal of the Petrograd Soviet and directly under the command of the Central Headquarters.<sup>5</sup> At the time of the October uprising the

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs about the October Revolution" in *Proletarskaya Revolutsia* No. 10, 1922, pp. 74-75 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The October Revolution in Latvia*, pp. 15, 239-41, 429 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> I. Saat, *The Bolsheviks of Estonia During the October Revolution*, p. 204 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia on the Eve of the October Uprising*, pp. 82-83 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>1</sup> Such a commission was set up during the Kornilov revolt under the C.E.C. of the Soviets.

<sup>2</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 54.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R., File 7384.

<sup>4</sup> M. G. Fleyer, "The Workers' Red Guards in the February Revolution" in *Red Records* No. 1 (16), 1926, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> *The Bolsheviks of Petrograd in 1917*, p. 653 (Russ. ed.).

Red Guards numbered about 23,000 men in Petrograd and its suburbs.<sup>1</sup>

The immediate initiative for the formation of the Red Guards in Moscow, as in Petrograd, came from the factory committees and the district Soviets. The Zamoskvorechye, Rogozhsko-Simonovsky, Lefortovo and other district Soviets repeatedly urged the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies to approve the statutes of the Red Guards and to allot money to buy arms.<sup>2</sup> A plenary meeting of the Rogozhsko-Simonovsky District Soviet attended by 350 people discussed the organisation of the Red Guards and speeches and reports from 50 factories and other places of work were heard. It was announced that 525 men had joined the Red Guards in the district and 10,585 rubles had been raised by the workers.<sup>3</sup>

A joint session of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies discussed the question of the Red Guards on October 10. The Bolsheviks proposed the immediate endorsement of the statutes of the Red Guards and pressed for the formation of Red Guard detachments. The S.R. faction left the meeting and the Mensheviks refused to take part in the vote, but Moscow's workers supported the Bolsheviks and their resolution was carried in the Soviet of Workers' Deputies by an absolute majority of 330 votes.<sup>4</sup>

Other cities and areas were quick to follow the lead of Petrograd and Moscow in organising the army of the revolution. The Kiev Red Guards numbered 5,000 before the October Revolution,<sup>5</sup> nearly 1,000 in Kharkov, 600 in Yekaterinoslav, etc.<sup>6</sup> The Bolshevik-led militia commission of the Revel City Soviet was active in forming detachments of Red Guards and a large quantity of arms was received by the workers of Revel from the sailors of the Baltic Fleet.<sup>7</sup> On September 29 the Samara Soviet approved the statutes of the local Red Guards written by V. V. Kuibyshev and by the middle of October their for-

<sup>1</sup> Y. F. Yerykalov, "The Red Guards in the Period of Preparation for the October Revolution" in *Historical Notes*, Vol. 47, 1954, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Moscow, September 26, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the Rogozhsko-Simonovsky District Soviet of Workers' Deputies, September 15, 1917 (S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R., File 122).

<sup>4</sup> *Izvestia*, Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, October 11, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *The Struggle for Soviet Power in the Kiev Area, March 1917–February 1918*, p. 355 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>6</sup> The Bolshevik Faction's Questionnaire at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, in the collection of articles, *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Moscow, 1957, pp. 359, 268 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>7</sup> Memoirs of the Chairman of the Militia Commission of the Revel Soviet, Comrade Kuksinsky (L.P.A., File 4000).

mation had been completed. Representatives of the Samara Soviet then went to Moscow, Tula and Petrograd to buy arms.<sup>1</sup> The total number of Red Guards throughout the country was (according to incomplete data) about 200,000.<sup>2</sup>

The mobilisation of the people for the armed struggle for Soviet power was facilitated by political functions such as the "Petrograd Soviet Day" held on October 22 by decision of the Petrograd Bolshevik Committee and the Interdistrict Conference of Soviets. *Rabochy Put* carried the following headlines on that day: "Today is Petrograd Soviet Day. Comrades workers and soldiers! Collect donations and make contributions! Rally the people under the banner of the Petrograd Soviet! Everybody go to meetings!" These calls of the Bolsheviks received the enthusiastic support of the workers and soldiers of Petrograd and the sailors of the Baltic Fleet. Counter-revolution plans for the staging of a demonstration and a Cossack religious procession on the same day were frustrated. Crowded meetings were held at factories and barracks. Sverdlov, Kalinin, Kosior, Lunacharsky, Kollontai, Krylenko, Nevsky, Samoilova, Volodarsky and other prominent leaders of the Bolshevik Party addressed the workers and soldiers. The Central and Petrograd Committees and the district committees of the Party also sent their delegates to the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets out to the factories and barracks. The subject of all their speeches was the question of the organisation of power. The workers, soldiers and sailors responded unanimously to the Bolshevik agitators' ardent calls and declared that they were ready to take up arms for Soviet power.<sup>3</sup>

In the course of the preparations for the armed uprising and during the insurrection itself the Central and Petrograd Bolshevik Committees and the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet paid special attention to maintaining strict revolutionary order in the capital. The Revolutionary Military Committee sent out the following directive to all district Soviets on October 25: "Revolutionary order in the districts shall be maintained by local Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The posts of militia commissars are abolished.<sup>4</sup> District Soviets are instructed to appoint commissars of their own and to place all local militia under their command, the commissars themselves to remain under the strict control of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in the Samara Gubernia*, pp. 142–44 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The History of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, 1962, p. 143 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Rabochy Put*, October 22 and 24, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> This refers to the Provisional Government commissars.

workers' and soldiers' deputies."<sup>1</sup> On the next day the Revolutionary Military Committee suggested that the district Soviets set up "commissariats of order and peace" in every district to deal with the liquidation of counter-revolutionary organisations, to get rid of gambling dens and brothels, and to combat drunkenness and immorality, etc.<sup>2</sup>

The deeply thought out programme of political, organisational and military measures taken by the Central and Petrograd Bolshevik Committees through the agency of the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, the district Soviets and their revolutionary committees, and through the soldiers' committees of the Petrograd garrison, ensured that the October armed uprising was carried through successfully and almost without bloodshed.

#### 6. THE SECOND ALL-RUSSIA CONGRESS OF SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES AND THE PROCLAMATION OF SOVIET POWER

The massing of the forces of the workers, soldiers and poor peasants in readiness for the socialist revolution continued unabated during the months of September and October, 1917. The mighty Bolshevik call "All Power to the Soviets!" rang throughout the land, gripping the minds of the labouring millions. Lenin said later: "Our slogan 'All Power to the Soviets', which the masses had tested in practice by long historical experience, had become part of their flesh and blood."<sup>3</sup>

The revolutionary workers, soldiers and sailors linked all their hopes and aspirations to the success of the armed insurrection and, with it, the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the consolidation of victory by the All-Russia Congress of Soviets. But there were still great difficulties to be overcome on the road to all this.

The S.R. and Menshevik-led C.E.C. of the Soviets had sabotaged the decision of the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to convene a second congress. Following the Democratic Conference the matter was discussed at an extended session of the C.E.C. together with representatives of local Soviets and Army committees. The main speaker, B. O. Bogdanov (Menshevik), claimed that one to three months would be required for the "thor-

<sup>1</sup> *The October Armed Uprising in Petrograd*, pp. 291-92 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 89.

ough" preparation of a second congress. But the Bolsheviks insisted on the Second All-Russia Congress being convened within a fortnight, in any case not later than October 15.<sup>4</sup>

As it was evident that the second congress could be called by the Bolshevik Soviets of Petrograd and Moscow over the head of the C.E.C. the conciliators first tried to delay its convocation by manoeuvring. The Menshevik Dan proposed that it be postponed until they had obtained "the consent of the local Soviets and front committees", and then, when this motion was defeated, they began a campaign in the press against its being convened at all. They maintained that the congress was unnecessary as the Constituent Assembly was to be convened six weeks later. Holding a second congress of the Soviets would mean "diverting our forces", claimed the Mensheviks and the S.R.s. The meaning of these "warnings" was obvious—at all costs to prevent power passing to the Soviets. The *Izvestia* of the C.E.C. wrote: "It is permissible to doubt whether the convening of the Congress is worthwhile merely in order to save the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets!'"<sup>5</sup>

The S.R. newspaper *Dyelo Naroda* was even more outrageous: "It must be admitted by everyone that the situation is becoming extremely alarming and dangerous. The congress of the Soviets, once convened, will demand full power!"<sup>6</sup> And the S.R. faction of the Petrograd Soviet appealed for "a decision on the convocation of the congress of Soviets to be deferred until the Pre-parliament begins its work".<sup>7</sup>

The story was put about at this time that the Bolsheviks wanted "to replace the Constituent Assembly by the second congress". The Bolshevik *Rabochy Put* replied: "In what way can the defencist traitors guarantee that the Constituent Assembly will not be put off again as it has already been put off once by the bourgeoisie with their benign collaboration? What guarantee can the defencists give that it will assemble at all?" The Bolshevik Party explained to the working people that if the bourgeoisie's henchmen succeeded in frustrating the congress of Soviets they would frustrate the Constituent Assembly too. Thus "the only guarantee that it will be convened is the transfer of power to the workers, the soldiers and the peasants".<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1928, p. XLVII (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, September 30, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Dyelo Naroda*, September 30, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 274.

<sup>5</sup> *Rabochy Put*, September 30, 1917.

The C.E.C. was finally compelled by the pressure of the Bolshevik Soviets and the energetic demands of the masses to fix a date (October 20) for the second congress of Soviets. But even after notices of the time of the congress had been sent out, the leaders of the C.E.C. continued to try and sabotage it, and the Right-wing S.R. leaders of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies acted in solidarity with them. They gave recommendations to all local Soviets of Peasants' Deputies "to refuse to send delegates to the Congress".<sup>1</sup>

A week later the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies passed a resolution which described the idea of transferring power to the Soviets as "not only harmful but criminal before the Constituent Assembly has been convened—a plot to destroy our homeland and the revolution".<sup>2</sup> Finally, on October 24 (i.e., the day before the Second All-Russia Congress was actually convened) the E.C. of the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies sent telegrams to every corner of the country pleading with the peasants' Soviets "not to take part in this Congress".<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile the Bolsheviks and the Bolshevik-led Soviets of Petrograd, Moscow, Helsingfors, Kronstadt, Revel and other cities had been keeping up a steady campaign to expose the manoeuvres of the conciliators and put forward in opposition to them their own revolutionary programme for the transfer of power to the Soviets through armed insurrection, the overthrow of the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government and the consolidation of the victory so gained by the All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

On October 13 the Northern Regional Congress of Soviets published an appeal to all front, army, divisional and regimental committees, the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, and to all sailors, workers and peasants explaining that the convening of the All-Russia Congress of Soviets would guarantee the convening of the Constituent Assembly, and that the Congress could immediately propose peace. It stated that those who wanted to prevent the Congress being convened wanted to destroy the Army and smash the revolution.

The delegates to the Northern Congress called on soldiers, sailors and workers "to overcome all obstacles and to make certain that they were represented at the All-Russia Congress on October 20".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Izvestia*, All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies, October 5, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Dyelo Naroda*, October 13, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1928, p. L (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1957, p. 168 (Russ. ed.).

On the same day the following cable was sent from the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets of Workers' Deputies, the Northern Regional Committee of Soviets and the Petrograd Soviet of Peasants' Deputies to all gubernia and uyezd Soviets: "The Central Executive Committee has organised the All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies for October 20. The participation of all Soviets of Peasants', Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies is of the utmost importance. We urge you to send your representatives to Petrograd immediately. Try not to be late, but do not feel embarrassed if you do arrive a little late."<sup>1</sup> But the Bureau of the C.E.C. then hastened to declare that the All-Russia Congress of Soviets was being convened on the initiative of the Bureau and is being prepared by a special commission of the Bureau and that "no other committee is authorised or entitled to take the initiative in convening the Congress". The Bureau also shifted the date of the Congress back from October 20 to 25 and called for the meetings of the party factions of the Congress to be held on October 23 and 24.

The leaders of the C.E.C. explained their latest move by alleging that it had proved "impossible" to gather the delegates together by October 20 and that "all front and army committees have displayed a negative attitude to the Congress".<sup>2</sup> Needless to say this did not represent the true situation.

By the autumn the soldiers' Soviets and committees were polarised into the front and army committees, which were in the hands of the Mensheviks and S.R.s, and a large section of the corps committees and an even greater part of the divisional and regimental committees, all of which followed the Bolsheviks. This became particularly obvious during the preparations and work of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets.

The S.R. and Menshevik Executive Committee of the Western Front and the conciliatory Territorial Soviet of the Caucasian Army and other top army organisations all came out against the congress, but their decisions were taken by small closed groups of people remote from the rank-and-file committees and so they did not represent the views of the mass of the soldiers. The Bolshevik faction of the Western Front Committee declared that "the protests against the convocation of the congress are coming from the bourgeois camp, which has been joined by the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, who have lost their heads, lost the confidence of the masses and are afraid to reveal their

<sup>1</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1928, pp. LI-LII (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Izvestia*, the C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 18, 1917.

self-isolation at the congress".<sup>1</sup> The committee of the 6th Caucasian Riflemen's Division condemned the position of the Caucasian Territorial Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies and stated that "only the congress of the Soviets will be able to take true revolutionary decisions" and reserved its right to send a representative to the congress.<sup>2</sup>

The congresses of the 6th, 35th and 42nd Army Corps, many divisional and regimental committees, and of the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies of the garrisons in the rear all spoke out in favour of the convening of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets and the transfer of state power to the Soviets with the formation of a revolutionary government responsible to them.<sup>3</sup>

The intrigues of the C.E.C. and E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies incensed the revolutionary sailors of the Baltic Fleet. Centrobalt appealed to the executive committee of the South-Western Front and to all other front committees to support the Second Congress of Soviets. Their cabled appeal, signed by P. Y. Dybenko, stated that the Baltic Fleet did not recognise in the "protests" against the congress the will of the soldiers and sailors but "the voices of some individuals in the committees...". Addressing the fighting army as a whole the Baltic sailors wrote:

"We ask all comrades soldiers, those who hold the country and the revolution dear, to support us and the All-Russia Congress of Soviets by sending their delegates, who must be told: 'You are going not merely to talk but to perform the great deed of emancipating labour. This Congress must take power into its hands and you must support it by every means at your disposal....' The All-Russia Congress of Soviets is our power, our weapon."<sup>4</sup> Resolutions in the same spirit were passed by many regiments and divisions during October, all showing that on the eve of the revolution the mass of the soldiers had tied their fate to the struggle for the establishment of Soviet power.

The Mensheviks and Right S.R.s now began a desperate struggle to secure Congress decisions favourable to the Provisional Government in the event of their failing to prevent the Congress taking place. The S.R. faction of the Petrograd Soviet advised its delegates at the Congress to "avoid questions which might lead to a crisis [i.e., the questions of power, peace and land.—A. A.]. Try to prove that

<sup>1</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution in Byelorussia*, Vol. I, pp. 795, 796 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Struggle for the Triumph of Soviet Power in Georgia*, p. 117 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1957, pp. 141, 145, 147, 151, 159, 166-68, 170-71, 177-78 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

the main purpose of the Congress is to promote the speedy convening of the Constituent Assembly".<sup>1</sup> The leadership of petty-bourgeois democracy thus had still not abandoned hope of forestalling the socialist revolution and of shunting the nation onto the reformist road of bourgeois parliamentarism.

The preparations for the congress of Soviets involved a great deal of hard work for the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, which decided at its meeting on October 24 to launch a wide campaign for the convening of the Second Congress of Soviets. The C.C. appointed Sverdlov to the commission dealing with the convocation of the congress and four days before it opened studied the agenda and determined the work to be done by the Bolshevik faction. Lenin was authorised to give the reports on the questions of power, peace and land and Sverdlov was instructed to handle all the problems of organisation connected with the congress. The C.C. also appointed Sverdlov and Stalin to lead the work of the Bolshevik faction.<sup>2</sup>

Lenin, and the Central Committee as a whole, regarded the convening of the Second Congress of Soviets as vitally necessary for the success of the armed uprising. In the complex national and international political situation of the time not only the fate of the congress but of the revolution itself depended on the Bolsheviks' readiness to lead the armed struggle of the workers and soldiers. All possibility of the proletariat winning power by peaceful means had now been completely extinguished. Further delay and postponement of the insurrection could only end in the defeat of the revolutionary classes and the triumph of counter-revolution.

At this decisive moment the Bolshevik Party had to struggle against the "blacklegs" of the revolution—Zinoviev and Kamenev—who were opposed to the armed uprising. Having little faith in the working class or its ability to rally the peasantry and wrench power from the bourgeoisie, the opportunists tried to sidetrack the Party onto the road of reformism. Trotsky, Zinoviev and their followers wanted to put off the solution of the major question, that of state power, until after the Second Congress of Soviets had met, which would have meant in practice putting it off until the Constituent Assembly met. The "obsession with parliamentarism" presented the greatest danger to the socialist revolution. To have waited for the S.R. and Menshevik C.E.C. to convene the congress of Soviets and timed the armed uprising to take place while the congress was in

<sup>1</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 274.

<sup>2</sup> *Minutes of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.)*, pp. 69, 118 (Russ. ed.).

session would have doomed the uprising to failure in advance, since it would have given Kerensky's government time to gather enough counter-revolutionary troops to crush the revolution. Such would have been the consequence of the opportunistic tactics which Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev tried to impose on the Party.

Trotsky, as Chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, persisted in trying to have the uprising postponed until the congress of Soviets had already begun. On October 18 he revealed to an open session of the Petrograd Soviet that the Bolsheviks "are ready to reply to any attempt of the counter-revolutionary forces to frustrate the congress of Soviets with a resolute counter-attack". Kamenev and Zinoviev confirmed his statement and on the next day it was carried in the C.E.C. *Izvestia* and other Petrograd newspapers.<sup>1</sup> Thus they committed the terrible crime against the Party and the country of betraying the date of the armed uprising to the enemies of the revolution.

Lenin and his supporters in the Central Committee had to make strenuous efforts to overcome the "parliamentary", "waiting" mood that gripped a section of the C.C. Already during the Democratic Conference Lenin had insisted that it was necessary for the Bolsheviks to rid themselves of "constitutional illusions". He urged them not to "wait" for the Second Congress of Soviets but to begin work immediately on the military and technical preparations for the armed uprising. In his writings "The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power", "The Crisis Has Matured", "Advice of an Onlooker", "Letter to Comrades" and others written in the pre-October period, Lenin dealt at length with the most basic question of the proletarian revolution—that of the relation between peaceful, parliamentary means of struggle for power (congresses of Soviets, the Constituent Assembly) and violent means (armed insurrection).

A study of the situation in Petrograd on the eve of the October Revolution demonstrates how profoundly right Lenin was in his prediction that the Right S.R.s and the Mensheviks, in combination with the Cadets, would strain every nerve to make the Second Congress of Soviets fail in its mission and so prevent the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia.

As the opening of the Second Congress of Soviets drew near the Mensheviks and S.R.s stepped up their resistance. *Dyelo Naroda* wrote: "We must devote all our energies to exerting the maximum pressure in the coming elections of delegates to the congress of Soviets... We must demand from the Soviets that delegates leaving for Petrograd be told to refrain from taking part in any decisive

action and to resist any such action in every way."<sup>1</sup> On October 11 the S.R. faction of the Petrograd Soviet passed a resolution denouncing the Bolsheviks' intention to overthrow Kerensky and his clique as impermissible.<sup>2</sup> Then on October 14, at a plenary meeting of the C.E.C. at which representatives of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies were present, Dan made a report on the current situation and proposed that an appeal be made to the Petrograd workers and soldiers urging them to give up all thought of taking any decisive action. Dan's proposal was supported by Gots, Martov and others. The Menshevik Bogdanov declared: "It's quite definite that the Bolsheviks are preparing an armed uprising. But the people will not come out onto the streets at the present moment, except for individual handfuls who will be instantly crushed by the very government you want to overthrow."<sup>3</sup> Dan's resolution was carried by a majority (made up of the Mensheviks, S.R.s and Internationalists). It read: "The C.E.C. regards any decisive action impermissible not only in Petrograd but throughout Russia."<sup>4</sup>

Before the victory of the October Revolution the leaders of "revolutionary democracy" made one further attempt to retain power in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The night before October 25 the C.E.C. and representatives of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies held an emergency meeting with the delegates who had already arrived for the Second Congress of Soviets. Dan, Lieber, Hendelman and others came out with furious attacks on the Bolsheviks. They were supported by Martov and Kolegayev, who tried to intimidate the workers and soldiers of Petrograd by saying that "the Soviets will not be able to hold power", "the moment to seize power has not yet arrived", and so on. Then the Mensheviks and S.R.s moved a resolution calling on the workers and soldiers "to maintain complete calm and to pay no heed to the calls to armed action".<sup>5</sup>

The Bolsheviks on the C.E.C. rejected outright the capitulationist proposals of the conciliators. M. M. Volodarsky, explaining the Bolsheviks' stand with regard to voting on the resolution, declared: "It is absolutely ridiculous for us to pass any kind of resolution only hours before the All-Russia Congress of Soviets is to begin."<sup>6</sup> After

<sup>1</sup> *Dyelo Naroda*, September 30, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 274.

<sup>3</sup> *Izvestia*, C.E.C. of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 15, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Izvestia*, C.E.C. of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, October 26, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), pp. 107, 268 (Russ. ed.).

that the Bolsheviks left the First C.E.C. of the Soviets for good. After October the C.E.C. became one of the major centres for the organisation of sabotage and counter-revolutionary mutinies against Soviet power.

The situation in Petrograd grew more and more critical. The Provisional Government learned from the speeches of Zinoviev and Kamenev of the coming insurrection and was preparing to meet it. Military cadets and Cossacks were called into the city and armoured cars with machine-guns were stationed in Dvortsovaya (Palace) Square. Inside the Winter Palace Kerensky was holding daily and nightly conferences with his ministers and with the Petrograd military command to finalise the plans for the counter-revolutionary offensive. All newspapers carried reports of an interview given by Home Minister A. M. Nikitin who declared that "the most decisive and energetic steps have been taken against the Bolsheviks". These steps consisted in posting troops to all the main revolutionary centres—a cavalry division was withdrawn from the front and sent to Moscow along with a Cossack brigade and regiment, Cossack and cavalry brigades were sent to Minsk, a cavalry division to the Donbas, a Cossack brigade to Kiev, a Cossack regiment to Smolensk, and so on.<sup>1</sup> The counter-revolution was also preparing to deal a blow to the headquarters of the revolution at Smolny.<sup>2</sup> In the Council of the Republic (the Pre-parliament) Kerensky demanded the arrest of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party and the abolition of the Revolutionary Military Committee. The Right-wing S.R.s and Mensheviks sided with him and the leaders of the S.R. faction of the Petrograd Soviet tried to secure the withdrawal of the Socialist-Revolutionaries from the Revolutionary Military Committee on the grounds that the Committee's activities were "harmful to the cause of the revolution". But the Left S.R.s overruled them—in a vote on October 23, 7 members of the faction voted for a break with the R.M.C., 39 were against, and 4 abstained.<sup>3</sup>

The "socialist" traitors continued their intrigues against the Revolutionary Military Committee, the headquarters of the armed

<sup>1</sup> *Dyen* (Day), October 20, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Smolny is a building in Leningrad (formerly Petrograd and Petersburg) which housed a school for girls of noble families until 1917. In August 1917 it became the premises of the Petrograd Soviet and of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies; Smolny also housed the Bolshevik faction of the All-Russia C.E.C. and the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, which, under Lenin's direction, organised the October armed uprising in Petrograd.

<sup>3</sup> C.P.A. I.M.L., File 274.

uprising. At a secret meeting of the Bureau of the C.E.C. on October 23, the Mensheviks and Right S.R.s agreed to request the Provisional Government to act resolutely against the R.M.C., and, if necessary, to arrest its leaders.<sup>1</sup>

On the morning of October 24 the forces of the counter-revolution began their offensive. On the orders of the Provisional Government a detachment of military cadets broke into the printing shops where the Bolshevik newspapers *Rabochy Put* and *Rabochy i Soldat* were printed. However, this attack was repulsed and the Petrograd Revolutionary Military Committee issued the following instruction: "1) Keep open the printing shops of the revolutionary newspapers; 2) propose to the editorial boards and the printers that they go on printing the papers; 3) the duty of honour of guarding the revolutionary printing shops from further counter-revolutionary attacks is given to the courageous soldiers of the Lithuanian Regiment and the 6th Reserve Battalion of the Sappers."<sup>2</sup> By 11 o'clock on October 24, *Rabochy Put* had come off the press with an editorial headlined "What Do We Want?" which said: "Power must go to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. A new government must be formed, a government elected by the Soviets, responsible to the Soviets, replaceable by the Soviets."<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile the delegates to the Second Congress of Soviets were arriving in Petrograd. They represented the working people of Central Russia, the Urals, Siberia and the Far East, and the national areas of Moldavia, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic, Transcaucasia and Central Asia. In all, 402 Soviets were represented at the congress, more than three quarters of which were joint Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.<sup>4</sup> 358 Soviets had sent workers' deputies, 330 soldiers and sailors, 138 peasants, and 4 Soviets had sent Cossacks.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the sabotage of the S.R. and Menshevik front committees the soldiers of the fighting army were not adequately represented. And the splitting activities of the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and its refusal to take part in the Second Congress of Soviets affected the representation of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. Nevertheless, if we bear in mind that most of the soldiers were peasants and that, together with the sailors, they

<sup>1</sup> *The History of the Civil War in the USSR*, Vol. 2, Moscow, 1947, pp. 197-98 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *The October Armed Uprising in Petrograd*, p. 294 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 387-90 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> V. Averyev, "The Soviets Before the October Socialist Revolution" in *Gosudarstvo i Pravo* (The State and the Law) No. 1, 1941, pp. 26, 27 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

numbered 199, i.e., about a third of the delegates, we can say that the working peasants were reasonably well represented at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

Many delegates had been mandated by their electors to work for the immediate transfer of all power to the Soviets in both the centre and throughout the country. According to incomplete data obtained by the Congress credentials commission 505 delegates out of a total of 670 (i.e., over 75%) spoke in favour of the transfer of power to the Soviets.<sup>1</sup> The party composition of the delegates changed as the Congress proceeded. According to the figures given by the bureaus of all factions, out of 649 delegates registered at the beginning of the Congress 390 were Bolsheviks (about 60%), 160 S.R.s (about 25%), 72 Mensheviks (11%), 14 Internationalists, 6 *Unity* group members and 7 Ukrainian Social-Democrats. But after the Mensheviks and the Right S.R.s walked out of the Congress and delegates who were late had arrived, the count became: 390 Bolsheviks, 179 Left S.R.s, 35 Internationalists and 21 Ukrainian Social-Democrats.<sup>2</sup>

Meetings of the factions preceded the plenary sessions of the Congress itself. They began on October 23 and lasted two days. They made especially clear the differences between the Bolsheviks and the petty-bourgeois parties in their estimation of current events. The Bolsheviks, voicing the opinion of the workers and the vast mass of the soldiers and the peasants, regarded the overthrow of the Provisional Government and the introduction of Soviet rule as the primary task, while the Mensheviks and the Right-wing S.R.s still hoped to steer the country onto the road of bourgeois parliamentarism.

Stalin, a member of the Party centre of the Revolutionary Military Committee, spoke at the meeting of the Bolshevik faction on the afternoon of October 24. He reported that the counter-revolutionary forces had tried to begin an offensive but had been repulsed. While the meeting was in progress information arrived that the Red Guards of the Vyborg District and the soldiers of the Keksholm Regiment had captured the Central Telephone Exchange and that the armoured cars that had been guarding it had gone over to the Soviet side.<sup>3</sup>

Trotsky took up a capitulationist position at this meeting. He tried again to replace the policy of armed insurrection by parliamentary means of struggle. "Arresting the Provisional Government," Trotsky said, "is not on the agenda as an independent task. If the Congress

formed a government and Kerensky did not obey it, then that would be a matter for the police, not a political matter." He also attempted to deter the Bolsheviks by pointing to the presence of 11,000 soldiers stationed in Luga and made the pessimistic statement: "Everything depends on the Congress of Soviets now. Our only salvation lies in the firm policy of the Congress."

Lenin had to bring all his great influence to bear to overcome the remaining "constitutional illusions" in the Party's leadership and to concentrate all its attention on organising the uprising. Matters were made no easier by the efforts of Trotsky and Kamenev to open negotiations with the Provisional Government, with the Headquarters of the Petrograd Military District, the City Duma, and finally with the Left S.R.s in the Pre-parliament on the possibility of "coming to an agreement", i.e., of delaying the uprising.<sup>4</sup>

On the evening of October 24 Lenin, who was still in hiding, sent the following letter to the Central Committee: "We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night, arrest the government, having first disarmed the officer cadets (defeating them, if they resist), and so on.... Under no circumstances should power be left in the hands of Kerensky and Co. until the 25th—not under any circumstances; the matter must be decided without fail this very evening, or this very night."<sup>5</sup>

Lenin's proposal was accepted and shortly afterwards Lenin himself went to Smolny. The plan for the uprising was carried out under his direct leadership and by the morning of October 25 the insurgents held nearly all the major strategic points of the capital.

The Bolshevik faction met on October 25 with Lenin now present in person. He had closely followed the changes in the balance of forces the day before as the delegates of local Soviets arrived in Petrograd from all over the country. According to the figures supplied by the organising committee there were 250 Bolsheviks out of the 518 delegates who had arrived at the Congress by October 24, 159 S.R.s, 60 Mensheviks, 27 representatives of the other petty-bourgeois parties and 22 non-party delegates.<sup>6</sup>

So on October 24 the conciliators comprised a little over a half of all the delegates. For this reason Lenin wrote in his letter to the C.C.: "It would be a disaster, or a sheer formality, to await the wavering vote of October 25.... In taking power today, we take it not against

<sup>1</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1928, p. 107 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Proletarskaya Revolutsia* No. 10, 1922, p. 92.

<sup>1</sup> Y. F. Yerykalov, *The October Armed Uprising in Petrograd*, Leningrad, 1966, pp. 345-47 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 235.

<sup>3</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1928, p. 163.

the Soviets, but for them.<sup>1</sup> But the position had changed by October 25. Sverdlov reported to the meeting of the Bolshevik faction that the majority of delegates were Bolsheviks and that the Left S.R.s were wavering under the impact of the successful armed uprising.<sup>2</sup>

An atmosphere of confusion and hesitation prevailed at the faction meetings of the Mensheviks and the S.R.s. The leaders of "revolutionary democracy" were rushing from one side to the other still hoping that Kerensky would be able to "restore the situation", i.e., crush the armed uprising. The Mensheviks passed a resolution which said that it was necessary to "reconstruct the government completely", to make it "homogeneous and democratic". The conciliators also included in their resolution a clause condemning the armed uprising.<sup>3</sup>

At 10 o'clock on the morning of October 25 the Revolutionary Military Committee published an appeal "To the Citizens of Russia", written by Lenin. This historical document stated: "The Provisional Government has been deposed. State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies—the Revolutionary Military Committee, which heads the Petrograd proletariat and the garrison.

The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power—this cause has been secured."<sup>4</sup>

At 2.35 in the afternoon the Petrograd Soviet went into emergency session in the Presentation Hall of the Smolny. The Revolutionary Military Committee reported on the victory of the uprising in the capital and Lenin made an impassioned speech on the current situation in which he told the deputies that the people would now have a government of their own, a Soviet Government free of the bourgeoisie. The government would be created by the oppressed classes themselves and the old state apparatus would be done away with and replaced by Soviet organs of rule.

"From now on, a new phase in the history of Russia begins, and this, the third Russian revolution, should in the end lead to the victory of socialism," declared Lenin.<sup>5</sup>

The Petrograd Soviet then passed a resolution (written by Lenin)

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 235.

<sup>2</sup> *During the Great Proletarian Revolution. Episodes of the Struggle in Petrograd in 1917*, Collection of Memoirs, Moscow, 1937, p. 174 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> Y. N. Gorodetsky, *The Birth of the Soviet State*, Moscow, 1965, p. 105 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 236.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

welcoming the victorious revolution and noting the unity, organisation and self-discipline displayed by the people in the virtually bloodless uprising. The Soviet also expressed its unshakable confidence that the workers' and peasants' government which would emerge from the revolution would firmly follow the road to socialism—the only road that could save the nation from the unprecedented disasters and horrors of the war—and appealed to all workers and peasants to give their selfless and whole-hearted support to the socialist revolution.<sup>1</sup>

At this time, when the final victory of the Petrograd proletariat and garrison over the Provisional Government had become obvious, the Mensheviks and S.R.s continued to confer among themselves on how to abolish "the consequences of the uprising", i.e., Soviet power. The Internationalists and Left S.R.s decided to demand that those in the majority at the Congress "make peace" with both the Right S.R.s and the defencist Mensheviks and consent to the formation of a "democratic government". But these were only the vain and pitiful attempts of political bankrupts.

The recollections of an eye-witness (an S.R.) illustrate the confusion of the S.R.s and the moral disintegration of their Right-wing leaders: "The attitude to the Central Committee was definitely hostile.... Towards late afternoon [on October 25.—A. A.] I happened to leave for an hour.... When I came back to the Smolny the Right and the Left were already in different rooms."<sup>2</sup> The same author recalls that the S.R.s made an effort to find support among the workers and soldiers of Petrograd but that nothing came of it. "We, the Left S.R.s, had no alternative to Lenin's militant calls. Thus the Bolsheviks were the undeniable and sole masters of the situation."<sup>3</sup>

The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets began on October 25 at 10.40 in the evening. The Menshevik and S.R. leaders of the C.E.C.—Dan, Bogdanov, Gots and others—came to the Congress but then refused to take part in it. Most of the members of the S.R. faction who considered themselves Left-wing did not follow their C.C. and stayed at the Congress.

It was agreed by all factions that the Congress Presidium should be elected on the basis of proportional representation—14 Bolsheviks, 4 Left S.R.s and one Ukrainian socialist. The Bolshevik faction was represented on the Presidium by Lenin, Antonov-Ovseyenko, Kollontai, Krylenko, Lunacharsky, Nogin, Sklyansky, Stuchka and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> S. D. Mstislavsky, *Five Days*, p. 70 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

six others. The following questions were on the agenda: the formation of a government, the question of war and peace, and the land question. It was also planned for the Congress to hear a report from the Petrograd Soviet.<sup>1</sup>

The proceedings of the Congress were conducted in a tense atmosphere of sharp party struggle. The Mensheviks and Right S.R.s had decided beforehand to try and disorganise the work of the Congress and incessantly addressed statements to the Presidium out of turn. Martov, on behalf of the Menshevik-Internationalists, proposed that the first debate should be on "the peaceful settlement of the disturbances [i.e., the armed uprising] so that civil war shall not be unleashed". This was also the view of the Left S.R.s and the *Unity* group members. The Bolsheviks without halting military operations against the counter-revolutionary Provisional Government declared that they had no objection to the various factions expressing their points of view on the events of the day and Martov's proposal was carried unanimously.

But it soon became apparent that the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties were not interested in united action but wanted only to prevent the transfer of power to the Soviets at all costs. This was especially obvious in the speeches of the S.R. and Menshevik delegates from the front and army committees. They slandered the Bolsheviks, repeatedly claimed that "the Congress of Soviets has no legal powers", and demanded that the Congress denounce "what is happening in Petrograd". The delegates of rank-and-file soldiers protested: "On whose behalf are you speaking?", "When were you elected?", "What do the soldiers say?", etc. The Menshevik Kuchin, the delegate of the 12th Army committee, tried to impress the delegates by saying that he expressed the viewpoint of a large number of armies, but the soldiers retorted: "Yes, you are Kornilov's man! You represent Headquarters, but not the Army!" After Kuchin rank-and-file soldiers spoke who dissociated themselves from the S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the front and army committees.<sup>2</sup> Then, after reading their statements, the Right S.R.s, Mensheviks and Bundists left the Congress to indignant cries of "Traitors!", "Deserters!" and "Good Riddance!", their attempt to wreck the Congress having failed. Only a small number of delegates followed Abramovich, Hendelman, Khinchuk and the others. The credentials commission reported that the number

<sup>1</sup> There is no information about such a report being given either in the newspapers or the archive materials.

<sup>2</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1928, pp. 34-37 (Russ. ed.).

of delegates who left the Congress was at first 25, rising later to 51, but still only an insignificant percentage of the total number of delegates.<sup>1</sup>

After the departure of the Mensheviks and Right S.R.s the Congress was able to get down to a businesslike debate on the formation of a government. Lunacharsky read an appeal on behalf of the Bolsheviks "To the Workers, Soldiers and Peasants", drafted by Lenin. This historic document, which expressed the demands of the overwhelming majority of the population of Russia, said: "Backed by the will of the vast majority of the workers, soldiers and peasants, backed by the victorious uprising of the workers and the garrison which has taken place in Petrograd, the Congress takes power into its own hands.

"The Provisional Government has been overthrown. The majority of the members of the Provisional Government have already been arrested....

"The Congress decrees: all power in the localities shall pass to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, which must guarantee genuine revolutionary order."<sup>2</sup>

Repeated applause punctuated the reading of the Appeal. One peasant delegate asked for the floor and suggested adding to the signature at the bottom of the Appeal ("The All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies) the words: "...and the delegates of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies". The Congress agreed to this<sup>3</sup> and the Bolshevik faction proposed that the representatives of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies be given the right to cast decisive votes at the rate of one vote per 25,000 peasants represented according to the representation quota.<sup>4</sup> This motion was carried, which meant that the Second Congress took state power on behalf of *all* working people. Lenin's Appeal "To the Workers, Soldiers and Peasants" was approved by the Congress with only two delegates voting against and 12 abstaining. This news was telegraphed at once to every part of the country and to the front lines.

In the late afternoon of October 26 the Congress met for a second time. It endorsed the decrees of the Congress Presidium abolishing capital punishment introduced by Kerensky and freeing the revolutionary soldiers and officers imprisoned by Kornilov, and the members

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 1957, p. 418.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1928, p. 54 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

of peasants' committees arrested by the Provisional Government.<sup>1</sup> The Congress then went on to consider the major issues before it—the questions of peace, land and the formation of the Soviet Government.

When Lenin first appeared on the Presidium he was welcomed by loud and long applause. He had been so occupied with leading the armed uprising that he had had no earlier chance to take a personal part in the work of the Congress. The delegates listened to Lenin's speech with rapt attention. "The question of peace is a burning question, the painful question of the day," said Lenin. "Much has been said and written on the subject, and all of you, no doubt, have discussed it quite a lot."<sup>2</sup> After making a brief introductory speech, Lenin read a declaration addressed to the peoples and Governments of all the belligerent nations which became known later as The Decree on Peace. It gave expression to the most cherished hopes of the working people of Russia and all countries the world over.

This first decree of the victorious socialist revolution outlined the programme of struggle of the new Soviet Government to withdraw from the imperialist war and offered the peoples of other countries a realistic means to achieve peace and to gain their freedom and national independence. In his speech Lenin stated the major principles of Soviet foreign policy: the peaceful coexistence of nations with different social and economic systems, economic co-operation between Soviet Russia and other nations, and the establishment of cultural, scientific and other links with them. Speaking on the nature of international treaties, Lenin said: "We reject all clauses on plunder and violence, but we shall welcome all clauses containing provisions for good-neighbourly relations and all economic agreements; we cannot reject these."<sup>3</sup> The Decree on Peace was welcomed by the delegates with great satisfaction and approved unanimously.

The land question was the next item on the agenda. Lenin spoke again. "We maintain that the revolution has proved and demonstrated how important it is that the land question should be put clearly. The outbreak of the armed uprising, the second, October Revolution, clearly proves that the land must be turned over to the peasants."<sup>4</sup>

Russia's bourgeois government, said Lenin, had delayed the solution of the land question until the nation had been completely dis-

located and the peasants were in revolt everywhere. When the peasants attempted to secure their legal rights through their Soviets and land committees they were charged with "anarchy" and suppressed. Dan, Gots, Avksentyev, Chernov and other leaders of the C.E.C. of the Soviets and the E.C. of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies gave active assistance to Kerensky in this dirty work. The government of the workers' and peasants' revolution would have to settle the land question without delay in order to help meet the needs of the great mass of the poor peasants.

One of the clauses of the Decree on Land was a mandate to land committees based on the 242 mandates given by local Soviets of Peasants' Deputies to their delegates. Establishing a correct relationship between the proletariat and the peasantry was of prime importance for the consolidation of Soviet power and the further advance of the revolution. The Decree on Land was endorsed by the Congress with only one vote against and eight abstentions.

Finally, the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets considered the question of setting up the Soviet Government and elected an All-Russia Central Executive Committee.

The Bolshevik faction moved the following resolution, also composed by Lenin: "The All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies resolves:

"To establish a provisional workers' and peasants' government, to be known as the Council of People's Commissars, to govern the country until the Constituent Assembly is convened."<sup>1</sup>

During the debate on the composition of the Soviet Government the Bolsheviks had again to fight off the resistance of those Mensheviks who had remained at the Congress. The Left S.R.s also opposed the formation of a Soviet government. Several hours before the Congress debated the question of the formation of a revolutionary government the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) had invited Kamkov and Karelín—prominent members of the Left S.R. Party—to its sitting and asked them to join the Council of People's Commissars. Karelín stated that the Left S.R.s were prepared to support any practical measures the new government might take, but refused to join it.

The Congress endorsed The Decree on Power by an overwhelming majority. The Council of People's Commissars, composed of Bolsheviks, was led by Lenin, and the supreme organs of state power now became the All-Russia Congress of Soviets and, between congresses, the All-Russia Central Executive Committee of the Soviets (all-Russia C.E.C.) elected by the Congress.

<sup>1</sup> The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, 1957, p. 414 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 262.

The Council of People's Commissars was given the authority of the Congress to govern the country by means of separate commissions (later termed People's Commissariats) to handle the various branches of national life. Their duty was to implement the programme decided on by the Congress in close collaboration with the other mass organisations of the working people. The All-Russia Congress of Soviets and the Central Executive Committee which it had elected were to supervise the work of the People's Commissars and had the power to remove them.

The Council of People's Commissars, in both its administrative and executive roles, functioned as an organ of collective rule. City, volost, and village Soviets became the local organs of government, and between congresses all authority was vested in their executive committees. This integrated system of organisation of Soviet rule made it possible to involve the broadest sections of the people in running the country.

After adopting the Decree on Power and approving the composition of the Council of People's Commissars, the Congress elected an All-Russia Central Executive Committee of 101 members—62 Bolsheviks, 29 Left S.R.s, 6 Menshevik-Internationalists, three Ukrainian Socialists and one S.R.-Maximalist.<sup>1</sup> The Congress also decided that the All-Russia C.E.C. could be supplemented by representatives of the peasants' Soviets, Army organisations and of the groups that had left the Congress.<sup>2</sup>

The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets completed its work at 5.15 in the morning on October 27. Delegates then hurried home to tell the working people of the historic decisions that had been taken at the Congress and to participate in the struggle for Soviet power in the localities.

## SUMMING-UP

The October Socialist Revolution ushered in a new era in the organisation of government in Russia. It brought with it the Republic of Soviets. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had always valued highly the initiative shown by the Russian workers, poor peasants and revolutionary soldiers and sailors in setting up mass political organisations in 1905 in the shape of the Soviets, and in later reviving them during the 1917 February Revolution on a nation-wide scale. Shortly after the victory of the October Revolution Lenin said: "Had not the popular creative spirit of the Russian revolution, which had gone through the great experience of the year 1905, given rise to the Soviets as early as February 1917, they could not under any circumstances have assumed power in October, because success depended entirely upon the existence of available organisational forms of a movement embracing millions. The Soviets were the available form."<sup>1</sup>

During the first months of the revolution (March-June 1917) the Soviets of the Deputies had the opportunity to take power but did not do so because the petty-bourgeois Mensheviks and S.R.s were in the majority in the Soviets and they proved incapable of carrying out an independent policy, taking instead the line of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. At the same time millions of the working people of Russia who were still fighting in the imperialist war were infected by the spirit of revolutionary defencism and naively believed that the bourgeois Provisional Government, under the "control" of the Soviets, would implement a programme of revolutionary advance.

In the struggle for undivided Soviet rule, the Bolsheviks strove to unite around the working class all democratic sections of the population. The tactics of the Bolshevik Party were designed to fulfil this major task both during the period of the peaceful progress of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, 1928, pp. 90-92 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

1 V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 89-90.

revolution and during the preparations for the October insurrection. Lenin and the Bolsheviks defended the idea of the workers' party entering into an alliance with the parties of petty-bourgeois democracy (the Mensheviks and the S.R.s) so that a revolutionary government could be formed by all the parties making up the majority in the Soviets. The essential conditions for such an alliance were: the breaking away of the petty-bourgeois socialists from the Cadets and the retention by the Bolsheviks of their freedom to agitate. From the very beginning of the February Revolution the Bolsheviks followed the line of isolating the liberal bourgeoisie and its Cadet Party and drawing to their side all revolutionary elements from among the Mensheviks and the S.R.s. But because the petty-bourgeois parties proved incapable of altering their policy of collusion with the bourgeoisie and of breaking away from the Cadets, the peaceful assumption of power by the Soviets ceased to be a possibility. The working people had to take power by armed force.

The unstable position of the Provisional Government after the February Revolution, and the opposition of its anti-democratic policies to the interests of the vast majority of the population, generated serious political crises in April, June, July and late August-early September, all of which accelerated the advent of the general crisis which gripped the entire country just before the October Revolution. In this situation the Bolshevik Party fought selflessly to overcome the crisis in a revolutionary way—to put an end to dual power and concentrate all power in the hands of the Soviets.

The process of winning the Soviets by the Bolsheviks began since the February Revolution but was completed only after the October Revolution. It was a complicated process which unfolded dialectically and involved the gradual changing of the political consciousness of the broad masses of the people. In the struggle to rally the non-proletarian sections around the working class and to alter the party composition and the direction of work of the Soviets, the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) and all local Bolshevik organisations made full use of such bodies as the Interdistrict Conference of Soviets in Petrograd, the joint meetings of the executive committees of the district Soviets of Moscow, etc.

After the events of July 3-5 the situation in the country changed radically. Power passed to the reactionary military clique inspired by the Cadets and a phase of anti-Bolshevik repressions set in; the Soviets, the factory committees and other mass organisations of the working people were threatened with destruction. The betrayals of the Menshevik and the S.R. leaders, their joining the camp of counter-revolution, turned most Soviets into helpless tools of the

Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks were compelled in these circumstances temporarily to cancel the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!"

The Russian bourgeoisie thought that its victory over the proletariat in July 1917 was the end of the struggle and it attempted to take advantage of its position to crush the Soviets of Deputies and the revolutionary committees in the Army and Navy once and for all. The ruling Cadets, backed by the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, advanced the idea of replacing the Soviets by Zemstvos, City Dumas and other bourgeois-democratic organs of self-government. But the forceful actions of the workers of Moscow while the State Conference was in session, supported by the working class of the whole country, frustrated these treacherous schemes of the enemies of the revolution to establish a military dictatorship "peacefully".

When working out new tactics in relation to the Soviets (after the July events), the Bolsheviks had to struggle on two fronts: against those who insisted on retaining the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!", and against those on "the Left" who wanted the Bolsheviks to withdraw from the Soviets altogether. The former were dangerous because they were sowing illusions about the "omnipotence" of the Soviets, which had to a great extent been corrupted by the S.R.s and the Mensheviks; while the latter were harmful in that the withdrawal of the Bolsheviks from the Soviets might have led to the loss of the positions they had already gained and undermined the Party's influence among the working people.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks had unshakable confidence in the creative possibilities of the Soviets—the original spontaneous organisations of the revolutionary classes. And it was to Lenin's and the Bolshevik Party's everlasting credit that they made a correct and timely assessment of the great importance of the Soviets and roused the millions of Russia's working people to struggle for the Republic of Soviets.

## A BRIEF OUTLINE OF EXISTING HISTORICAL STUDIES OF THE SOVIETS OF 1917 AND A REVIEW OF AVAILABLE SOURCES

The study of the appearance, growth and work of the Soviets of Deputies in Russia constantly attracts the attention of many historians and students of law and philosophy. The Soviets are studied in the Soviet Union and to some extent by foreign historians too.

The name of Lenin is inevitably associated with the beginnings of the scientific study of the history of the Soviets. There is a colossal amount of factual information and summarised material in Lenin's works relating to the activities of the Soviets in 1905-07, during the February bourgeois-democratic Revolution in 1917, the October Socialist Revolution and the early years of Soviet power.

The history of the Soviets begins in 1905 and Lenin's first statements on the Soviets date from this time. His article "Our Tasks and the Soviet of Workers' Deputies" (November 1905)<sup>1</sup> contains a principled assessment of the Soviets as the unprecedented, spontaneous organisations of the working people destined to embody the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry and to set up a provisional revolutionary government. Analysing the situation in which the Soviets of Workers' Deputies emerged and their aims and tasks, Lenin called attention to the fact that during the first bourgeois-democratic Revolution of 1905-07 the Soviets of Deputies defended not only the interests of the workers and the poorest peasants but those of all the democratic sections of the population and of the various peoples of Russia. Lenin called for a deep and comprehensive study of the historical experience of 1905, in particular for an analysis of the activities of the Soviets. In his works "The State Duma and Social-Democratic Tactics", "The Present Situation in Russia and the Tactics of the Workers' Party", "The

Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.", and others, Lenin studied the work of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies and outlined the prospects for their development in the future revolution.<sup>1</sup>

During the First World War the Bolsheviks repeatedly discussed the question of the Soviets and the part these mass bodies would play in a new revolutionary upsurge. Lenin carefully analysed the position of the various classes and parties and the motive forces of the revolution. He warned the leading bodies of the Bolshevik Party against possible mistakes, in particular in connection with the organisation of Soviets. Lenin wrote in a letter to A. G. Shlyapnikov on October 10, 1915: "News from Russia testifies to the growing revolutionary mood and movement, though to all appearances this is not yet the beginning of revolution. Except in connection with an insurrection, the 'strength' of a Soviet of Workers' Deputies is an *illusion*. One should not give way to it."<sup>2</sup>

As a result of Lenin's strenuous theoretical work and practical activity in guiding the mass revolutionary movement, the Bolshevik Party had in its possession by the time of the second bourgeois-democratic revolution the fundamentals of a complete and consistent teaching on the Soviets.

With the victory of the October Revolution the Soviets became the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and as the leader of the first workers' and peasants' government in the world Lenin continued to develop the theory of the organisation of the Soviets and to summarise their practical work. He ruthlessly exposed the attempts of the Russian Mensheviks, S.R.s and Popular Socialists and of the opportunist leaders of the Second International to distort the essence of the Soviet system and to oppose to its truly popular democracy the democracy of the bourgeois system.

In the first years of Soviet power Lenin wrote such important works as *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, *The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, "Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" (given at the First Congress of the Communist International), "*Left-Wing*" Communism—an Infantile Disorder, *A Contribution to the History of the Dictatorship*, and others. Lenin's post-October works developed further the idea of the Soviets as the tried and tested state form of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Vol. 35, pp. 208-09.

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, pp. 17-28.

the dictatorship of the proletariat capable of drawing the great bulk of working people into the job of running the country.

Even in the most difficult times of the Civil War and foreign intervention Lenin managed to find the time to work on questions of theory and to pay attention to the organisation of scientific research. It was on his initiative that the Socialist Academy was founded in 1919. Scientific commissions on the history of the October Revolution and the Communist Party worked under the Central Committee, the Petrograd and Moscow Committees and the gubernia committees of the Party.

The socio-political and theoretical magazines *Bolshevik*, *Proletarskaya Revolutsia* (Proletarian Revolution), *Krasnaya Letopis* (Red Records), *Krasny Arkhiv* (Red Archives) and *Istoric-Marxist* (Marxist Historian) played a big part in the study of the history of the October Revolution. The first numbers of these magazines published the recollections of V. A. Antonov-Ovseyenko, V. P. Antonov-Saratovsky, A. S. Bubnov, V. D. Bonch-Bruyevich, N. I. Podvoisky, I. P. Flerovsky and other Communist Party and Soviet Government workers.

The first books to deal with the organising of the Soviets before and during the socialist revolution appeared in the years 1919-23. They were mostly popular booklets intended to disseminate knowledge of the basic principles of the Soviets.<sup>1</sup>

N. N. Baturin, Y. N. Ignatov, P. O. Gorin, Y. P. Krivosheina and other scholars contributed a great deal to the study of the history of the Soviets.<sup>2</sup> The writings of Y. N. Ignatov and Y. A. Yakovlev are devoted to concrete questions of the work of the Soviets.<sup>3</sup>

In the twenties much attention was given to popularising the work of the Petrograd district Soviets before the October Revolution and the struggle of the Bolsheviks to win over the district Soviets and the

<sup>1</sup> V. A. Karpinsky, *What Is Soviet Power and How Is It Organised?* Moscow, 1918; V. I. Nevsky, *How Was Soviet Power Created and What Has It Achieved in Three Years?* Moscow, 1920; P. F. Kudryashov, *The Paths of Soviet Construction (1917-1919)*, Moscow, 1919; A. F. Rybin, *The Soviets of Peasants' and Workers' Deputies*, Moscow, 1918; and others (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> N. Baturin, *The Struggle for the Soviets as Organs of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Leningrad, 1925; Y. Ignatov, *The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies in 1917*, Moscow, 1925; P. Gorin, *The Proletariat's Struggle for Power in 1917*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927; Y. P. Krivosheina, 1917. *The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies*, Vol. 1, Part 1, Moscow-Leningrad, 1931 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>3</sup> Y. Ignatov, *The All-Russia Congress of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in 1917*, Leningrad, 1927, and *The City and District Soviets as Forms of Workers' Participation in the Running of the State*, Moscow, 1929; Y. Yakovlev, "Questions of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets" in *Proletarskaya Revolutsia* No. 12 (71), 1927 (Russ. ed.).

Interdistrict Conference of Soviets in Petrograd. These were the subjects of articles in historical journals by P. F. Kudelli, M. L. Lurie, G. I. Marochkin and S. I. Zukerman, I. D. Mordasov, M. I. Mitelman and others also wrote on this period in the forties and fifties. It should be noted that most books on the district and city Soviets are not research works as such for they are based on personal recollections without reference to archive material.

In the twenties there also appeared the first popular booklets on the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, and articles and memoirs about the district Soviets of Moscow and the area around Moscow. The authors were A. Y. Arosev, N. S. Angarsky, M. F. Vladimirska, M. S. Olminsky, V. A. Obukh, Y. M. Yaroslavsky, O. A. Pyatnitsky and other leaders and organisers of the Soviets in 1917. These works vividly convey the period and contain much interesting information.<sup>1</sup>

The diaries and memoirs of leaders and rank-and-file members of the Soviets of Petrograd, Kronstadt, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Saratov and other towns occupy a special place among the publications devoted to the organisation and work of the Soviets in 1917.<sup>2</sup> Together with the minutes and resolutions of the Soviets these memoirs (especially those written shortly after the October Revolution) are of inestimable value.

Law experts have been studying the questions associated with the formation of the Soviets ever since the Revolution. V. N. Averyev, S. L. Ronin, S. S. Boltinov, G. S. Mikhailov and others have analysed the legislative acts of the Soviets, the relations between the Soviets in the centre and in the localities and other questions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Y. Arosev, *The Moscow Soviet in 1917*, Moscow, 1927; N. Angarsky, *The Moscow Soviet in the Two Revolutions*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1928; M. Olminsky, 1917, Moscow, 1926; Y. Yaroslavsky, *On the Eve of October*, Moscow, 1932; Collections of articles: *Essays on the History of the October Revolution in Moscow*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927; *From February to October (in Moscow)*, Moscow, 1928; *A Year of Struggle*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927; *The Surrounding Areas of Moscow in 1917*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>2</sup> A. M. Kollontai, *A Year of My Life and Work*, Odessa, 1921; F. F. Ras kolnikov, *Kronstadt and Peter in 1917*, Moscow, 1925; A. Shlyapnikov, 1917, Books 1-4, Moscow-Leningrad, 1928-31; F. P. Matveyev, *From the Notebook of a Deputy of the 176th Infantry Regiment*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927; F. Yevseyev, "Petrograd in 1917" (The Memoirs of a Deputy of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies) in *The Soviets of Working People's Deputies* No. 1, 1957; V. P. Antonov-Saratovsky, *Under the Banner of the Proletarian Struggle*, Vol. I, Moscow-Leningrad, 1925 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>3</sup> V. Averyev, "The Bolshevik Party in the Struggle to Win the Soviets (1917)" in *Soviet Construction* Nos. 9-10, 1937; and by the same author: "The Soviets Before the October Socialist Revolution (September-October)" in *Soviet State and Law* No. 1, 1941; S. L. Ronin, "The Role of the Soviets in Preparing for the Armed Uprising" in *Soviet Construction* Nos. 9-10, 1937; S. Boltinov, "The Role

In 1927-28 collective works and monographs appeared on the history of the Soviets and the October Revolution. The most important of these are: *Essays on the History of the October Revolution* edited by M. N. Pokrovsky, and Z. Serebryansky's *From Kerensky to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.<sup>1</sup> The writers of the Essays—E. B. Genkina, M. S. Yugov, O. A. Lidak, N. L. Rubinstein and others—between them did a vast amount of work finding out facts and generalising from them. They criticised from a Marxist stand-point Cadet, S. R. and Menshevik historians. But the *Essays on the History of the October Revolution* contain some erroneous assertions. For instance, M. S. Yugov wrote that Lenin regarded insurrections as the principal means of winning power by Soviets even before the July events.<sup>2</sup>

In the twenties and early thirties the Party had to defend the Marxist-Leninist theory of revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat and socialist construction from the attacks of the Trotskyists and other anti-Party groupings. Stalin made a particularly great contribution in this struggle. His works contain much factual information on the history of the October Revolution and of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. However, alongside his consistently Marxist evaluations and conclusions, Stalin also made certain subjective statements on the social phenomena of the time which, during the period of the personality cult, had a negative effect on the development of the social sciences—in particular, this inhibited the study of all questions relating to the Soviets.

In 1931, on the initiative of Gorky, the publication of a multi-volume *History of the Civil War in the USSR* was begun. Soviet social scientists in this and other collective works of the thirties and forties summarised the enormous amount of factual and statistical material which had accumulated over the years and settled some major outstanding problems concerning the history of the proletarian revolution and the founding of the Soviet state.<sup>3</sup>

After the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) more collective works,

of the Local Soviets in Creating Soviet Power" in *Soviet State and Revolution* Nos. 5-6, 1931; G. S. Mikhailov, "The Main Stages in the Development of the City Soviets" in *Soviet Law* No. 2, 1922; also by the same author: "Soviet Representation and Electoral Law" in *Soviet Power*, Nos. 4-6, 1922 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on the History of the October Revolution* edited by M. N. Pokrovsky, Vol. 1-2, Moscow-Leningrad, 1927; Z. Serebryansky, *From Kerensky to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Essays on the History of 1917*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1928 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> *Essays on the History of the October Revolution*, Vol. 2, p. 241 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> *History of the Civil War in the USSR*, Vol. 1, Moscow, 1936; Vol. 2, Moscow, 1947.

monographs and theses appeared on the establishment and consolidation of Soviet power and on the work of the Soviets in Petrograd, Moscow and throughout the country in 1917-20. These studies were based on a solid body of source material, for the authors made extensive use of the huge number of documents and other papers to be found in both central and local archives.<sup>1</sup>

In the fifties and sixties the formation and work of the mass working people's bodies (the Soviets, factory committees, trade unions, etc.) became the subject of deep study by Soviet historians. Academician I. I. Mints made a worthy contribution in this field. He studied the development of Lenin's views on the Soviets during the Revolution of 1905-07, the February bourgeois-democratic Revolution, in the course of preparing for and during the October armed uprising in Petrograd, and during the period when Soviet power was being established throughout the land.<sup>2</sup>

The part played by the Soviets in establishing the integrated state apparatus and institutions of the Soviet Union is discussed in detail in a monograph by Y. N. Gorodetsky.<sup>3</sup> The author succeeds in demonstrating precisely how the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Government advanced socialist democracy in the complex situation of late 1917 and early 1918.

Individual aspects of the organisational, political and economic work of the Soviets in 1917 are discussed to a greater or lesser extent in the works of G. N. Golikov, L. S. Gaponenko, P. N. Sobolev, I. F. Petrov, P. V. Volobuyev, B. M. Morozov and other writers.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Chugayev, *The Destruction of the Bourgeois State Machine and the Creation of the Soviet State Apparatus*, Moscow, 1957; *Establishing Soviet Power in the Localities in 1917-1918*, edited by A. M. Pankratova, A. L. Sidorov and D. A. Chugayev, Moscow, 1953; A. M. Andreyev, *The Lithuanian People's Struggle for Soviet Power (1918-1919)*, Moscow, 1954; P. Sobolev, *Preparing for the Socialist Revolution and Establishing Soviet Power in Voronezh Gubernia*, Voronezh, 1955; and others (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> I. I. Mints, "The Development of Lenin's Views on the Soviets (1905-April 1917)" in *Problems of the History of the C.P.S.U.* No. 2, 1961; and by the same author: "Problems of the History of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" in *Problems of History* No. 11, 1962, and "The Victory of the Socialist Revolution Throughout the Country" in *History of the USSR*, No. 4, 1957. Also I. I. Mints, *The History of Great October*, Vol. I, Moscow, 1967, and Vol. II, Moscow, 1968 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>3</sup> Y. N. Gorodetsky, *The Birth of the Soviet State*, Moscow, 1965.

<sup>4</sup> G. N. Golikov, *An Outline of the History of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, 1959; L. S. Gaponenko, *The Working Class of Russia in the Preparations for the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, 1964; P. N. Sobolev, *The Poor Peasantry, the Ally of the Proletariat in the October Revolution*, Moscow, 1958; I. F. Petrov, *The Strategy and Tactics of the Bolshevik Party in Preparing for the Victory of the October Revolution*, Moscow, 1964; P. V. Volobuyev, *The October Revolution and the Peasant Question*, Moscow, 1964.

The birth and advance of Soviet democracy has also been successfully dealt with by Soviet lawyers and philosophers; of special interest are the monographs of A. I. Lepeshkin, V. V. Nikolayev, G. S. Kalinin, and the research articles of V. N. Strunnikov, N. N. Dedov and others.<sup>1</sup>

In the post-war years there has been a considerable advance in the study of the work of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Research works and articles by S. A. Artemyev, G. I. Zlokazov, L. F. Karamysheva, D. V. Oznobishin, and B. M. Kochakov, and a monograph by M. N. Potekhin, have made serious contributions to our knowledge of the first Soviet created by the revolutionary people in 1917.<sup>2</sup>

Research workers are increasingly attracted to the study of the work of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies, the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies of the Moscow garrison and the Moscow district Soviets. A monograph by S. M. Kukushkin and works and articles by F. B. Meshman, A. P. Kholopova and S. G. Altman together comprise a detailed study of these Soviets.<sup>3</sup>

buyev, *The Russian Proletariat and Bourgeoisie in 1917*, Moscow, 1964; B. M. Morozov, *The Party and the Soviets in the October Revolution*, Moscow, 1966 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>1</sup> A. I. Lepeshkin, *The Local Organs of Power of the Soviet State (1917-1920)*, Moscow, 1957; V. V. Nikolayev, *Lenin on the Soviet State*, Moscow, 1960; G. S. Kalinin, *The Great October Socialist Revolution and the Formation of the Soviet State*, Moscow, 1959; V. N. Strunnikov, "From the History of the Theory of the State Form of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" in *Soviet State and Law* No. 4, 1959; N. N. Dedov, "The Constituent Character of the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets and the Constitutional Significance of Its Decisions" in *Scientific Notes of the Sverdlovsk Institute of Law*, Vol. 8, 1959 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> S. Artemyev, *The Bolsheviks' Struggle to Win the Soviets in 1917 in the Period of Dual Power* (Based on the documents of the district and city Soviets of Petrograd), Moscow, 1951; G. Zlokazov, *The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies During the Peaceful Period of Advance of the Revolution (March-July 1917)*, Moscow, 1964; D. V. Oznobishin, "The Struggle of the Bolsheviks Against the Conciliators in the Petrograd Soviet (March 1917)" in *Historical Notes*, Vol. 73; L. F. Karamysheva, *The Struggle to Bolshevise the Soviets in the Period of Preparation for the October Armed Uprising (August-October 1917)*, Moscow, 1950; B. M. Kochakov, "The Bolshevising of the Petrograd Garrison in 1917" in *The October Armed Uprising in Petrograd*, Collection of Articles, Moscow-Leningrad, 1957; M. N. Potekhin, *The First Soviet of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Leningrad, 1967 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>3</sup> S. Kukushkin, *The Moscow Soviet in 1917*, Moscow, 1957; F. B. Meshman, *The Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies from the February Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution of 1917 up to the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, 1944; A. P. Kholopova, *The Struggle to Bolshevise the Moscow Soviet in 1917*, Moscow, 1949; S. G. Altman, *The Bolshevising of the District Soviets of Moscow and Their Work from March to October, 1917*, Moscow, 1963 (Russ. eds.).

In addition to monographs on the metropolitan and a few of the local non-metropolitan Soviets, Soviet historians have begun to produce research works dealing with the activities of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies of whole gubernias, regions and large economic areas. P. P. Grishin and Z. L. Serebryakova have written books on the Soviets of the Central Industrial Area, and S. A. Artemyev, G. A. Gerasimenko, and A. I. Razgon on the Soviets of the Volga Area.<sup>1</sup> Monographs by A. G. Alexeyenko, N. G. Goncharenko, B. M. Babii, V. Y. Borshchevsky, V. M. Terletsky and others have appeared in the Ukraine.<sup>2</sup>

It is gratifying to note that students of the early Soviets are now coming from ever wider areas of the country: valuable works have been produced in Byelorussia, Latvia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, Kirghizia and other republics and regions of the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> Monographs summarising the research work already done on the Soviets were specially written to mark the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution.<sup>4</sup>

#### Marxist-Leninist historical science advances in conditions of sharp

<sup>1</sup> P. P. Grishin, *The Formation of the Soviets of Ryazan Gubernia and Their Work in the First Years of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Ryazan, 1957; Z. L. Serebryakova, *The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of the Central Industrial Area in the Period of Preparation for the October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, 1964; S. A. Artemyev, *The Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies in Chuashia in 1917-1918*, Cheboksary, 1965; G. A. Gerasimenko, *The Party Struggle in the Soviets of the Lower Volga Area (1917)*, Saratov, 1966; A. I. Razgon, *The Soviets of the Lower Volga Area in the Period of the Peaceful Advance of the Revolution (March-June 1917)*, Moscow, 1964 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> A. G. Alexeyenko, *The City Soviets of the Ukrainian S.S.R. (1917-1920)*, Kiev, 1960 (Russ. ed.); N. G. Goncharenko, *The Soviets of the Donbas in 1917 (March-December 1917)*, Stalino, 1957 (Russ. ed.); B. M. Babii, *The Local Bodies of State Power in the Ukrainian S.S.R. in 1917-1920*, Kiev, 1956 (in Ukrainian); V. M. Terletsky, *The Soviets in the Kiev Area in 1917*, Kiev, 1957 (in Ukrainian); V. Y. Borshchevsky, *The Working Class and the Soviets of the Donets-Krivoi Rog Basin in the October Revolution*, Parts 1-2, Dnepropetrovsk, 1962 (Russ. ed.).

<sup>3</sup> V. G. Ivashin, *The Revolutionary Activity of the Minsk Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in Preparing for and Carrying Through the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Minsk, 1952; T. Draudin, *The Landless Peasantry of Latvia in the Struggle for Land and Soviet Power in 1917-1919*, Riga, 1959; D. M. Rudnitskaya, *From the History of the Building of the Soviets in Turkestan (1917-1920)*, Tashkent, 1964; V. A. Sapogina, *The Struggle to Form a Soviet State Apparatus in Turkestan (February 1917-April 1918)*, Tashkent, 1956; A. G. Zima, *The Kirghizian Soviets in 1917*, Frunze, 1962; B. O. Kashkoyev, *The Struggle for the Soviets in Daghestan (1917-1920)*, Moscow, 1963 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>4</sup> A. M. Andreyev, *The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on the Eve of the October Revolution*, Moscow, 1967; *The Soviets in the First Year of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (edited by D. A. Kovalenko), Moscow, 1967; Y. G. Gimmelson, *The Soviets in the Period of Foreign Intervention and Civil War*, Moscow, 1968 (Russ. eds.).

struggle between the socialist and bourgeois ideologies. Even since 1917 Cadet, S.R. and Menshevik historians have been engaged in "refuting" Lenin's teachings on the Soviets both in Russia and abroad. In the present day this occupation is followed by bourgeois falsifiers of history in the U.S.A., the Federal Republic of Germany and other capitalist countries.

In 1918 Karl Kautsky wrote a booklet entitled *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*. It was a kind of reformists' credo. The renegade Kautsky "protested" against the Soviets being given full power as organs of the workers' and peasants' state and played the part of an apologist for bourgeois parliamentarism.<sup>1</sup> Kautsky's servile attack was given the rebuff it deserved by Lenin.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the twenties there appeared volumes of "reminiscences" by former S.R. and Menshevik leaders of the Petrograd Soviet. In spite of their tendentious character, these are of interest as a source of clarification of the precise positions of the petty-bourgeois leaders at the various stages of the revolution.<sup>3</sup> N. N. Sukhanov's memoirs occupy a special place among S.R. and Menshevik writings on the Soviets.<sup>4</sup> Sukhanov, one-time "non-factional" socialist member of the Petrograd Soviet E.C., praises the leaders of "revolutionary democracy"—Chkhheidze, Tsereteli, Dan and others—but throws dirt on the Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), the Petersburg Committee of the Bolshevik Party, and the Bolshevik faction of the Petrograd Soviet. He writes that the October Socialist Revolution and the establishment of Soviet power was "contrary to the generally accepted [i.e., by the Mensheviks and S.R.s.—A. A.] plan for the advance of the revolution". Lenin mercilessly exposed Sukhanov and his followers, describing them as "cowardly reformists who are afraid to deviate from the bourgeoisie, let alone break with it, and at the same time they disguise their cowardice with the wildest rhetoric and brag-gartry".<sup>5</sup>

Openly hostile views on the Soviets as the organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat are to be found in the works of P. N. Milyukov,

kov, M. Karpovich and other bourgeois historians<sup>1</sup> who in the twenties and thirties invented the so-called "theory of the fatal mistakes" made by the Russian Provisional Government still widely held by foreign reactionary writers of histories.

The organisation and work of the Soviets on the eve of the October Revolution and during the first years of Soviet power have been studied in many general works published abroad—those of John Reed, A. Rhys Williams and others. In the situation which took shape in Russia in 1917, the Soviets were indeed a splendid revolutionary instrument, wrote the British historian G. D. Cole. In each area they appeared right from the midst of groups of workers who no longer oppressed by the autocracy were avidly learning to act independently.<sup>2</sup>

One of the most thorough-going studies of the October Revolution is the three-volume work of E. H. Carr. The author tries to take an objective view of the circumstances which led to the birth of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies and notes their affinity to the Paris Commune. Carr's work devotes a great deal of space to descriptions of the congresses of the Soviets, the mutual relationship between the central organs of Soviet power and the local Soviets, etc. But like most bourgeois historians Carr draws heavily on the pronouncements of Cadets, S.R.s and Mensheviks.<sup>3</sup>

The two-volume monograph of the American historian W. H. Chamberlain is far more biased. Following Sukhanov, Tsereteli, Chernov and Co., Chamberlain attributes the initiative for the organisation of the Soviets to the Mensheviks and the S.R.s, and ascribes a greater role to Trotsky than to Lenin during the armed uprising. Chamberlain also repeats, among other things, the legend that the Bolsheviks "usurped power"—an invention of the defencist Mensheviks and Right S.R.s.<sup>4</sup>

American histories of the October Revolution of the fifties and sixties are even worse. *The Seizure of Political Power in a Century of Revolutions* by Feliks Gross was published in New York in 1958. Contrary to the facts of history this bourgeois writer alleges that the masses played only a passive and minor part in the October Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> P. N. Milyukov, *The History of the Second Russian Revolution*, Vol. I, Issues 1-3, Sophia, 1921; Michael Karpovich, *Imperial Russia, 1801-1917*, New York, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> G.D.H. Cole, *Communism and Social Democracy, 1914-1931*, Part 4, 1958, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923 (History of Soviet Russia)*, Vols. 1-3, Toronto, 1950-1953.

<sup>4</sup> William Henry Chamberlain, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921*, New York, Vol. 1, 1935, pp. 278, 311, 313, etc.

<sup>1</sup> K. Kautsky, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Vienna, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, pp. 105-13, 227-30.

<sup>3</sup> V. B. Stankevich, *Memoirs, 1914-1919*, Berlin, 1920; A. Peshekhonov, "The First Weeks" (Recollections of the Revolution) in *In the Strange Land*, Collection of Articles, Vol. 1, Berlin, 1923; V. Chernov, "The 'Soviets' in Our Revolution" in *The Year of the Russian Revolution*, Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1918; and also by the same author, *Revolutionary Days in Petrograd*, London, 1917.

<sup>4</sup> N. Sukhanov, *Notes on the Russian Revolution*, Books I-VII, Moscow-Petrograd-Berlin, 1919-1923.

<sup>5</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 476-77.

tion and that the Bolshevik Party at that time "was not able to claim a national, i.e., an all-Russia majority". Twisting the facts Gross states that it was the Mensheviks who first advanced the idea of forming mass political organisations of the working class and that the Bolsheviks only seized the Soviets later on.<sup>1</sup>

With the express purpose of falsifying the history of the socialist revolution in Russia and presenting a distorted picture of Soviet democracy, bourgeois publishers have brought out collections of the "memoirs" of Kerensky, Milyukov, Tsereteli, the books of Trotsky, the scurrilous pamphlets of Abramovich, etc. And in order to give these publications the appearance of being works of research an attempt is being made to bolster them with "source" material.

The Hoover Institute of War, Revolution and Peace (U.S.A.) published in 1961 a three-volume collection of documents *The Russian Provisional Government*, compiled and edited by Professor of Colorado University R. P. Browder and the ex-Minister and Chairman of the Provisional Government, A. F. Kerensky, which entirely misrepresents the actions of the Soviets.<sup>2</sup> Most of the materials relating to the Petrograd Soviet reflect only the loyalty of the S.R. and Menshevik majority of the Soviet to the Provisional Government. While separate objectively revolutionary measures taken by the Soviet and effected under the pressure of the masses are presented as the outcome of the intrigues of "irresponsible elements".<sup>3</sup>

West German reactionary historians G. von Rauch, O. Anweiler, H. von Rimscha and others are also very active in the falsification of the history of the Soviets and the October Revolution.<sup>4</sup> Their books caricature and slander the Soviets. Rauch treats the Soviets as "the fruit of anarchy and the instincts of the street"—they were, he says, "semi-anarchist in character". Anweiler, following Milyukov and other Cadet historians, makes the slanderous assertion that the Soviets emerged only as "inferior replacements of underdeveloped parliamentary institutions in the localities and of an absent parliament at the centre", and of the "undeveloped professional and party organisations".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Feliks Gross, *The Seizure of Political Power in a Century of Revolutions*, New York, 1958, pp. 227, 232.

<sup>2</sup> *The Russian Provisional Government. 1917. Documents*. Selected and edited by Robert P. Browder and Alexander F. Kerensky. In 3 vols. Stanford, California, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Vol. III, p. 1195.

<sup>4</sup> Georg von Rauch, *Geschichte des bolschewistischen Russland*, Wiesbaden, 1955; O. Anweiler, *Die Ratebewegung in Russland 1905-1921*, Leiden, 1958; Hans von Rimscha, *Geschichte Russlands*, Wiesbaden, 1960.

<sup>5</sup> O. Anweiler, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-88.

American and West German historians are also busily spreading the idea that the Bolsheviks were "selfish" and "cynical" in their attitude to the Soviets, an idea invented by the ideologists of imperialism. Lenin's views on the Soviets and the tactics of the Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) in relation to the Soviets are seriously distorted in the works of the German historians Erdmann Hanisch and Hans Koch and also in the articles of the French historian Marc Ferro.<sup>1</sup>

Soviet historians have always paid great attention to exposing Cadet, S.R. and Menshevik historians and to the scientific criticism of the false notions of English, American and West German scholars. In the twenties and thirties M. N. Pokrovsky, V. A. Bystryansky, Y. M. Yaroslavsky and others wrote in this field.<sup>2</sup> Later on I. I. Mints, B. Y. Shtein, V. I. Salov, A. O. Chubaryan, V. V. Lebedev and other Soviet writers produced monographs and scientific articles on the international significance of the October Revolution and on the way this subject is dealt with by historians abroad.<sup>3</sup>

The possibilities for studying any problem of history, including that of the organisation and work of the early Soviets, depend directly on the availability of relevant source material—on its discovery and publication. Lenin often drew the attention of Soviet historians to this fact. His ideas for the collection, classification and publication of all materials relating to the history of Soviet society found their first expression in the compilation of a large number of "records" of the October Revolution, the amassing of a vast quantity of facts on the formation of the Soviets in March-April 1917, on the

<sup>1</sup> Erdmann Hanisch, *Geschichte Sowjetrusslands 1917-1941*, Freiburg, 1951, S. 12; *Sowjetbuch*. Hrsg. von Hans Koch, Köln, 1958, S. 37; Marc Ferro, "Les débuts du Soviet de Petrograd (27-28 février 1917)"—*Revue historique*, 84-e année, T. CCXXIII, Avril-Juin 1960, pp. 353-80.

<sup>2</sup> M. N. Pokrovsky, *Mr. Milyukov's Contradictions*, Moscow, 1923, and others; V. Bystryansky, *The Workers' and Peasants' Revolution in Russia as Seen by Bourgeois Publicists*, Petrograd, 1919; and by the same author: *The Bourgeois Revolution and the Proletarian Revolution*, Petrograd, 1920, and *The Mensheviks and the S.R.s in the Russian Revolution*, Petrograd; Y. Yaroslavsky, *The Third Force*, Moscow, 1932, etc. (Russ. eds.).

<sup>3</sup> *Foreign Writings on the October Revolution*, Collection of Articles, edited by Academician I. I. Mints, Moscow, 1961; B. Y. Shtein, "Some Questions of the History of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the Civil War in the U.S.S.R. as Presented by Foreign Historians in the Years 1917-1924" in *From the History of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Collection of Articles, Moscow, 1957; V. I. Salov, *German Histories of the Great October Socialist Revolution*, Moscow, 1960; V. V. Lebedev, A. O. Chubaryan, *Against the Anti-scientific Presentation of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Modern Bourgeois American and British Historiography*, Moscow, 1959 (Russ. eds.).

congresses and conferences of the Soviets, and on their political, economic and other work.<sup>1</sup> The five-volume record *The Great October Socialist Revolution* published by the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. in 1957-1962 is a particularly valuable work.<sup>2</sup>

Much work was done in the 20s and 30s to establish the facts and to classify the materials relating to the formation and functioning of the Soviets before the socialist revolution and in the first few years after it. This work was carried out by a Commission on History working under the Institute of Soviet Construction of the Communist Academy which printed several collections of documents, mainly concerned with the original organisation of the Soviets.<sup>3</sup> At the same time a start was made on the publication of the minutes and materials of the Petrograd and some other Soviets.<sup>4</sup>

The series of documentary studies *The Great October Socialist Revolution* issued between 1957 and 1963 by the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., the Institute of Marxism-Leninism attached to the C.C. of the C.P.S.U. and the Central Board of Archives attached to the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. is of the greatest importance.<sup>5</sup> 10 volumes contain about 7,000 highly valuable documents and other materials reflecting the main events that occurred during the preparations for and the carrying through of the October Revolution and the consolidation of Soviet power in the

<sup>1</sup> N. Avdeyev, *The 1917 Revolution (A Record of Events)*, Vols. I-II, Moscow, 1923; V. Vladimirova, *The 1917 Revolution (A Record of Events)*, Vol. III, Moscow, 1923; I. I. Blumental, *The Revolution of 1917-1918 in Samara Gubernia (A Record of Events)*, Vol. I, Samara, 1927; M. K. Dianova and P. M. Ekzemylyarsky, *1917 in the Ivanovo-Voznesensk District (A Record)*, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, 1927; N. Shakhanov, *1917 in Vladimir Gubernia (A Record of Events)*, Vladimir, 1927; and others (Russ. eds.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. A Record of Events*, Vols. I-V, Moscow, 1957-1962.

<sup>3</sup> *The Organisation and Building of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies in 1917. Collection of Documents and Materials*. Edited and prefaced by P. O. Gorin, Moscow, 1928; *The Soviets in October*, edited by S. A. Piontkovsky, Moscow, 1928; *The Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and Other Peasants' Organisations*, Vol. I, Parts 1-2 (March-October 1917). Edited and prefaced by A. V. Shestakov, Moscow, 1929 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>4</sup> *The Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Minutes of the Meetings of the Executive Committee and the Bureau of the E.C.*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1925; *The Saratov Soviet of Workers' Deputies (1917-1918)*, Collected Documents edited by V. P. Antonov-Saratovsky, Moscow-Leningrad, 1931; *The Orel Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in 1917. Documents and Materials* compiled by A. A. Komarov and K. A. Sokut, Voronezh, 1932 (Russ. eds.).

<sup>5</sup> *The Great October Socialist Revolution. Documents and Materials*, Vols. I-X, Moscow, 1957-1963 (Russ. ed.).

central and the non-central areas of the country. They demonstrate the creative initiative of the people, describe the organisation of the Soviets and committees of soldiers and peasants, and establish the vanguard role of the working class and the leadership given by the Central Committee of the Party and local Bolshevik bodies. The series includes documents of the Provisional Government, both its central and local bodies, and of bourgeois and landowners' institutions and organisations. This enables the research worker to get a more precise picture of the balance of class forces at the various stages of the struggle preceding the October Revolution.

The publication of the documents of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), the correspondence of the C.C. with local Bolshevik organisations, the texts of the leaflets and posters of the Petersburg, Moscow and other Party committees, and the minutes of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies for the year 1917-18 has also facilitated deeper study of the history of the Revolution and the organisation and activities of the Soviets.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

In order to study the formation and early work of the Soviets it is necessary to refer to a wide variety of sources, those to be found in archives being of especial importance. The author has examined the materials in the Central State Archives of the October Revolution of the U.S.S.R. (C.S.A.O.R., USSR), the State Archives of the October Revolution and Socialist Construction of the Leningrad Region (S.A.O.R.S.C., L.R.), the State Archives of the October Revolution

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) Central Committee (August 1917-February 1918)*, Moscow, 1958; *C.P.S.U. in Resolutions of the Congresses, Conferences and C.C. Plenary Meetings, 1898-1954*, Moscow, 1954; *Correspondence of the Secretariat of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) with Local Party Organisations*, Collection of Documents, Vol. I, Moscow, 1957; *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the Struggle for the Victory of the Socialist Revolution in the Period of Dual Power. February 27-July 4, 1917*, Collection of Documents, Moscow, 1957; *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the Struggle for the Victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, July 5-November 5, 1917*, Collection of Documents, Moscow, 1957, "Minutes and Resolutions of the Bureau of the C.C. of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) (March 1917)" in *Problems of the History of the C.P.S.U.* No. 3, 1962; "Minutes of the All-Russia (March) Meeting of Party Workers (March 27-April 2, 1917)" in *Problems of the History of the C.P.S.U.* Nos. 5-6, 1962; *The Krasnoyarsk Soviet (March 1917-June 1918)*, Collection of Documents, Krasnoyarsk, 1960; *The District Soviets of Petrograd in 1917*, Vol. I, Moscow-Leningrad, 1964, 1967; *Minutes and Decisions of the Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet*, Moscow, 1963.

and Socialist Construction of the Moscow Region (S.A.O.R.S.C., M.R.), the Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism attached to the C.C. of the C.P.S.U. (C.P.A. I.M.L.), the Lenin-grad Party Archives (L.P.A.), and the Party Archives of the Institute of the History of the Party of the Moscow Committee (M.C.) and the Moscow City Committee (M.C.C.) of the C.P.S.U.

The materials that have been discovered can be divided into three main groups. The first contains sources concentrated in the archives of central and local Soviets. The Central State Archives of the October Revolution include the documents of the first All-Russia C.E.C. (File 6978), the second All-Russia C.E.C. (File 1235) and the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Provisional Government (File 406). Together with reports and various kinds of information, including the results of inquiries made by Soviets, the C.S.A.O.R. contain the documents of bourgeois and landowners' organisations (the "committees of order", Zemstvos, city dumas, etc.). These latter are of interest in that they indicate the relations that existed between the Soviets and the Provisional Government and the local organs of bourgeois rule.

The State Archives of the October Revolution of the Leningrad Region is the main source of material for the study of the work of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Apart from the minutes of the City (Petrograd) Soviet, its Executive Committee and the E.C. Bureau (File 7384), the archives contain the documents of the workers' and soldiers' sections of the Soviet and the minutes and resolutions of its plenary sessions (File 1000). The minutes of many of the district Soviets are also relatively well preserved, but the materials of the Interdistrict Conference of Soviets are incomplete and disconnected (Files 47, 54, 55, 100, 101, 149, 151, 8878).

Before the first C.E.C. of the Soviets was formed (in June 1917) the Petrograd Soviet served as the all-Russia centre of the Soviets. The archives of the Petrograd Soviet therefore contain the minutes, telegrams and other materials of the gubernia, uyezd, city and other Soviets, and of the front, army and regimental soldiers' committees. The minutes of the workers' and soldiers' sections of the Petrograd Soviet (File 1000) are of very considerable interest.

The present book also makes extensive use of the resources of the State Archives of the October Revolution of the Moscow Region, above all the archives of the Moscow Regional Bureau of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Mobus) (File 683).

Shortly after the February Revolution the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies established links with provincial Soviets and began regular exchanges of information with them. The archives of Moscow

thus contain papers which came from Soviets hundreds and thousands of miles away from Moscow—reports from Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Omsk, Petropavlovsk, etc.

The archives of the Moscow City Soviet of Workers' Deputies (Files 66 and 66/40) and those of the district Soviets of Moscow (Files 54, 73, 122, 145, and others) are all in a satisfactory state and they show that the formation of the Soviets in Moscow had special features of its own which are not always borne in mind. Historical literature dealing with the October Revolution frequently mentions the Inter-district Conference of the Soviets in Petrograd, but until recently the historians paid no attention to the periodic joint meetings of the executive committees of the district Soviets of Moscow between May and October 1917. The Bolsheviks made active use of this means of uniting the mass organisations and the meetings served as a counter-balance to the S.R. and Menshevik E.C. of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

The State Archives of the October Revolution of the Moscow Region also contain the archives of the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies of the Moscow garrison (File 684). Very little use is made of them although they provide valuable information on the organisation of the Soviets of Soldiers' Deputies of Tver, Vladimir, Voronezh and other cities, and on the work of the Bolshevik faction of the Moscow Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies (File 683).

Other important sources are the documents of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.), the Petersburg and Moscow city and regional Party committees, the district committees of Petrograd and other Bolshevik organisations. The Central Party Archives (File 70) and its Leningrad branch (File 4000) hold many manuscripts and memoirs of active participants in the October Revolution and report notes of Party instructors, all containing valuable information on the Soviets. The minutes of the Petersburg Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) (File 1), and of the Second Gorodskoy, Kolpino, Novaya Derevnya and Petrograd district Party committees (Files 1817 and 2315) all testify to the fruitful work done by the Bolsheviks in organising the Soviets in March and April 1917.

Another group of documents is the minutes, directives and other materials of the Menshevik and S.R. parties (C.P.A. I.M.L., Files 275 and 274 respectively), extracts from Milyukov's private records (C.S.A.O.R., U.S.S.R., File 579), Tsereteli's memoirs, and the speeches of Chkhheidze, Chernov and other politicians of the bourgeois and conciliators' parties. It is essential to make critical use of such materials as they enable one to follow the struggle of the political parties in and around the Soviets.

Finally, the newspapers of the day are an invaluable source. The Central organ of the Bolshevik Party, *Pravda*, the Moscow *Sotsial-Demokrat*, and the newspapers published by the regional, gubernia, and city Party organisations gave factual information on the state of Soviet affairs, exposed the manoeuvres of the conciliators, and propagated the Marxist-Leninist theory of the state and revolution and of socialist democracy.

After the February Revolution nearly all of the bigger Soviets began to publish their own *Izvestia*. In conjunction with other sources, every *Izvestia* can be of use to the research student, since they contain relatively impartial information on many matters.

The conciliators' press and the bourgeois press are a different matter. The official organ of the S.R. Party *Dyelo Naroda* and the Menshevik *Rabochaya Gazeta* and *Novaya Zhizn* regularly printed news of the Soviets. But as a general rule their editorials, news and reviews were heavily biased. They reflected only their authors' point of view (often those of the leaders of the petty-bourgeois parties), but such materials clarify the position of the conciliators on major points of the work of the Soviets.

The Cadet *Rech* and the bourgeois *Dyen*, *Utro Rossii* and others highlight the intentions of the counter-revolutionary forces and so enable one to follow their plans for the destruction of the Soviets and their replacement by Zemstvos, Dumas, and other bodies of bourgeois-landowner rule.

The job of writing general works on the history of the Soviets of 1917 is made difficult by the fact that many aspects of the Soviets' activities have not yet been studied at all—for example, the mass movement of the working people for the formation of joint Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, and the relations between the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, the soldiers' committees and peasant bodies.

The February Revolution brought a period of dual power to the country—revolutionary-democratic rule in the shape of the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and bourgeois rule in the shape of the Provisional Government and its local bodies throughout the country. The position of the Soviets in this system of dual power, and their relations with the Provisional Government and the bourgeois "committees of order", have likewise been very little studied.

The Soviets refused to take power during the events of July 3-5 when under the leadership of the Mensheviks and S.R.s and to a great extent lost their influence on the course of events. Power went to the forces of counter-revolution. This did not mean, however, that the mass political organisations of the workers, soldiers and peasants had

outlived themselves. The experience of history indicated that the Soviets would put an end to the corrupting influence of the Mensheviks and S.R.s and, as we know, the victorious October Revolution resulted in the Soviets becoming the state organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But for a long time historical literature gave inadequate attention to the Soviets in the post-July period and a gap was left between the peaceful period of the revolution and the direct preparations for the October armed uprising. The tactics of the Bolshevik Party in relation to the Soviets in the period after dual power had ceased to exist (up to the crushing of the Kornilov revolt) received scant treatment. And without a knowledge of this it is impossible to understand the cause of the revival of the Soviets in the course of defeating the Kornilov revolt and their subsequent shift to revolutionary positions in September.<sup>1</sup>

Historical studies of the Soviets of 1917 have hitherto suffered from one serious shortcoming: they have dwelt mainly on the organisation of the Soviets and their executive committees and various departments, and made comparatively little study of their actual work. The author has tried to overcome this drawback by relating organisational questions to the many-sided work of the Soviets.

<sup>1</sup> Of late this period has been intensively studied; see: I. F. Petrov, *Bolshevik Party Strategy and Tactics in Preparing for the Victory of the October Revolution*, Moscow, 1964; O. N. Znamensky, *The July Crisis of 1917*, Moscow-Leningrad, 1964; N. Y. Ivanov, *The Kornilov Revolt and Its Defeat*, Leningrad, 1965; A. M. Andreyev, "The Bolshevik Organisations and the Soviets after the End of the Period of Dual Power (July 1917)" in *Problems of the History of the C.P.S.U.* No. 11, 1966 (Russ. eds.).

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